

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
*Selected Works 2024-2010*



*Augustin Maurs has ventured into the no man's land of the indefinable, very close to the interface between art and existence. His performance is a confounding statement on the question of identity and staging.*

Christian Baier



Augustin Maurs draws on his musical background (Paris CRR conservatory, Detmold University of Music and Berlin Music Academy Hanns Eisler) to explore processes of music making as such and within their different historical, social or political components. His work consists of a body of “interplays”, located at the crossroad between performative, conceptual and collaborative practices.

Current and recent works include OUT OF TUNE, commissioned by Steirischer Herbst 2024, SYNCOPATIONS (2024) presented at KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin, THE STORY OF THE WOLF TONE (2023), for the Sound Biennale in Valais, NOTHING MORE (2022), commissioned by Bergen the Assembly Triennale, or I HAVE NOT WORDS (2018), conceived for the world's largest propaganda loudspeaker and presented at the Busan Biennale.

Augustin Maurs has also developed an important curatorial activity, notably as a curator of the music program of the Geneva artfair, artgenève/ musique, where he assembled a series of exhibitions, performances or concerts including a.o. artists Saâdane Afif, Isabel Lewis, Pierre Huyghe, Angela Buloch, Susan Philipsz, Anri Sala, Annika Larsson or Monica Bonvicini and in collaboration with a.o. the Akademie der Künste Berlin, the Herkulesaal in Munich, the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva, the Goldoni theatre in Venice or the Berlin Philharmonie.

Vimeo Showcase:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/11295527>

Password: Showcase



## SYNCO PATIONS

KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin  
25.05.2024

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Interplay  
for voices, percussions, electronically generated  
sounds, and other ghost instruments

With

DIEGO ANDRÉS MOSCOSO  
CONSTANTIN ENGELMANN

<https://vimeo.com/989939559/d2a66d779d>

*"Syncope, an absence of the self. A 'cerebral eclipse', so similar to death that it is also called 'apparent death'."*

Catherine Clément, Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture

The term syncope comes from Latin syncopare as "to contract a word by omission of middle sounds" but also "to faint away", "to swoon", from Greek synkoptein "to cut up". Among musicians, syncopation is known as a missing main beat causing a shift in rhythmic accent. 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2 becomes ...2,... 2,...2, ... a sudden interruption with the potential to overtake itself, syncopation has the ability of bouncing on what has been taken away.

This interplay between voice-s, electronically generated sounds, percussions and other "ghost instruments" explores syncopation as a rhythmic pattern and as a music-historical leitmotif, but also as a state of being and as a political allegory. Throughout a repeated cycle of different "musical time zones", it also questions how the term was used, perceived and assigned to specific musical features, many of which of non-western origin.

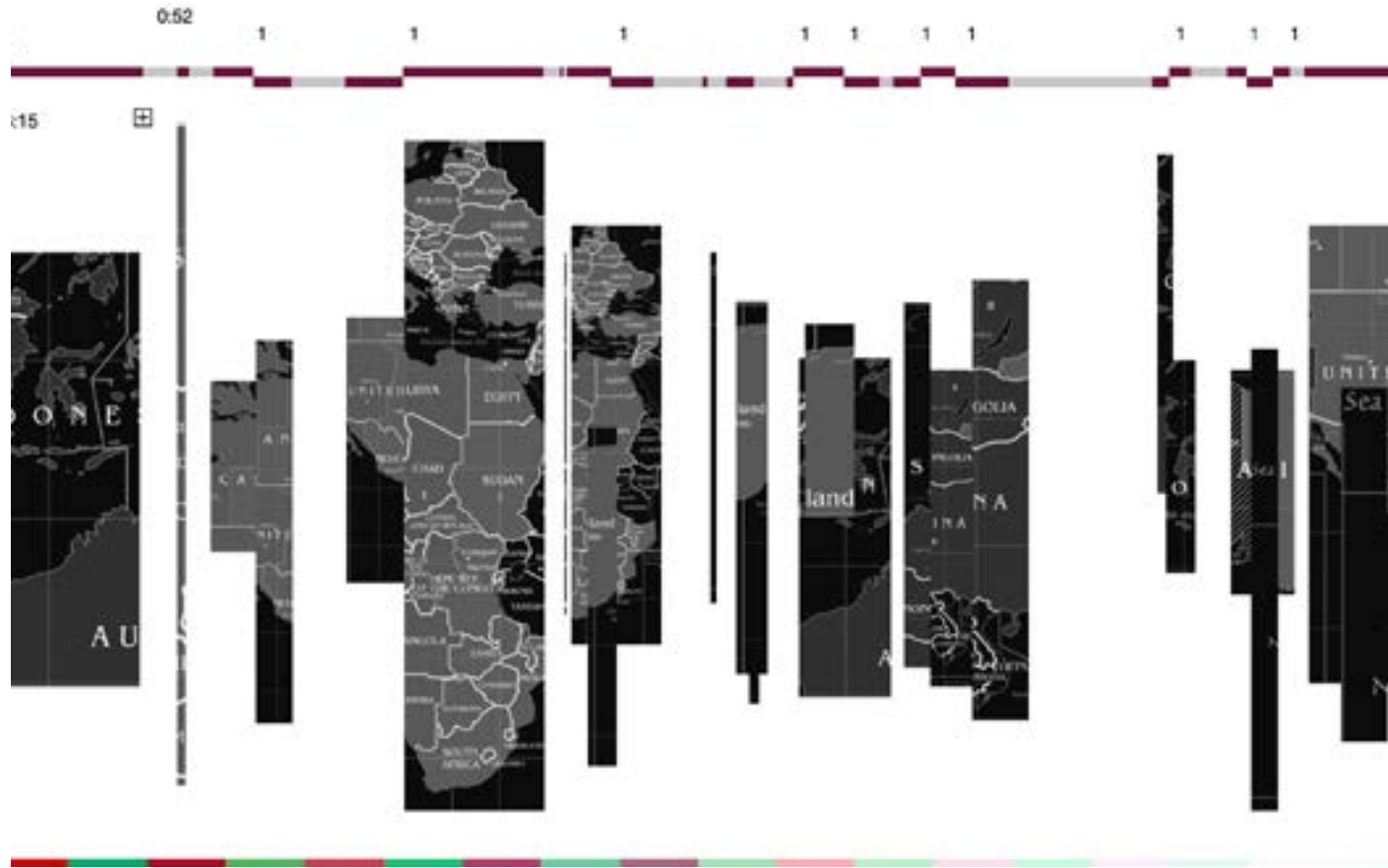
The evening traces the echoes of different syncopated motifs; bits of languages, bits of sounds, middles taken away leading to historical, geographic and semantic gaps. "No", "now" and "own" mingle strangely, the history of clapping hands meets the history of applause, and a voice breaks into an impossible song. These often generative, yet collapsing musical processes also form the basis of an introspective inquiry. What has happened to us? Syncopation may appear as a possibility to outline what is missing, to take it by both ends, and eventually to overcome it by performing it. It triggers the ecstatic, bodily consciousness of music making as a way to silence the world, calling for renouncement for the sake of continuity.

## SYNCO PATIONS

KW Institute for Contemporary Art

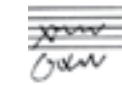






NOW

SEQUENCES



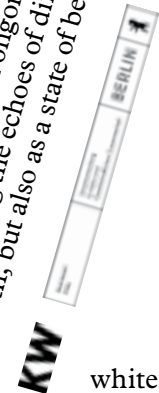
- Syncopated Time Zones
- Walking on Nightingale Floors
- Live
- The Concert
- Listening to Abbey Lincoln
- They Are Dancing
- (No)
- Waiting Room

*SYNCOPATIONS for voice(s), electronically generated sounds, percussions and other ghost-instruments, Augustin Mours in collaboration with Constantin Engelmann & Diego Moscoso, KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin 25.5.2024*

*“Syncope, an absence of the self. A ‘cerebral eclipse’, so similar to death that it is also called ‘apparent death?’”  
Catherine Clément, *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture**

*The term syncope comes from Latin syncope as “to contract a word by omission of middle sounds” but also “to faint away”, “to swoon”, from Greek synkoptein “to cut up”. Among musicians, syncope is known as a missing main beat causing a shift in rhythmic accent. A sudden interruption with the potential to overtake itself, syncope has the ability of bouncing on what has been taken away.*

*This evening is part of an ongoing project that questions how the term was used, perceived and assigned to specific musical features, mainly of non-western origin. Tracing the echoes of different historical, geographic and semantic gaps, it explores syncope as a rhythmic pattern and as a music-historical leitmotif, but also as a state of being and as a political allegory.*



Straight Ahead karşılama kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden

white noise Abbey Lincoln

## THE STORY OF THE WOLF TONE

Biennale Son Valais  
16.09.2023 - 29.10.2023

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Sound Installation  
& Association *Les amis de la quinte du loup / The Friends of the Wolf Tone*

<https://vimeo.com/991142838>

The Story of the Wolf Tone is a project based on the musical phenomenon known as the “wolf”, an acoustic parasite resulting from sound interferences emitted by certain string instruments. The designation itself refers to the “wolf fifth”, an interval whose mathematical ratio was cut off in order to fit in the “circle of fifths”, a representation of the Pythagorean tuning on which all Western music is based. Considered very dissonant and unpleasant to listen to, the wolf fifth has been either banned or systematically avoided in musical practice until today.

Augustin Maurs uses this phenomenon to explore our relationship to musical systems, and how the figure of the wolf has been used to embody the forbidden, the unfit or the noise. The project first takes the form of a human voice picking up on a melodic break in a resigned “hoo hoo” broadcasted by horn loudspeakers in the field facing the former Chandoline hydroelectric power station. Inside, a room is dedicated to the “Friends of the Wolf Fifth” (*les amis de la quinte du loup*), an association created on the occasion of the project. There, another sound piece responds to the first, “Déchiffre in Wolf Fifths” for any string instrument. The room is set-up with documents and musical or lupine sources corresponding to the aims of this associative space, such as: “to promote wolf-noises, spiral-cycles and variable diapasons”.

## THE STORY OF THE WOLF TONE

Biennale Son Valais 2023

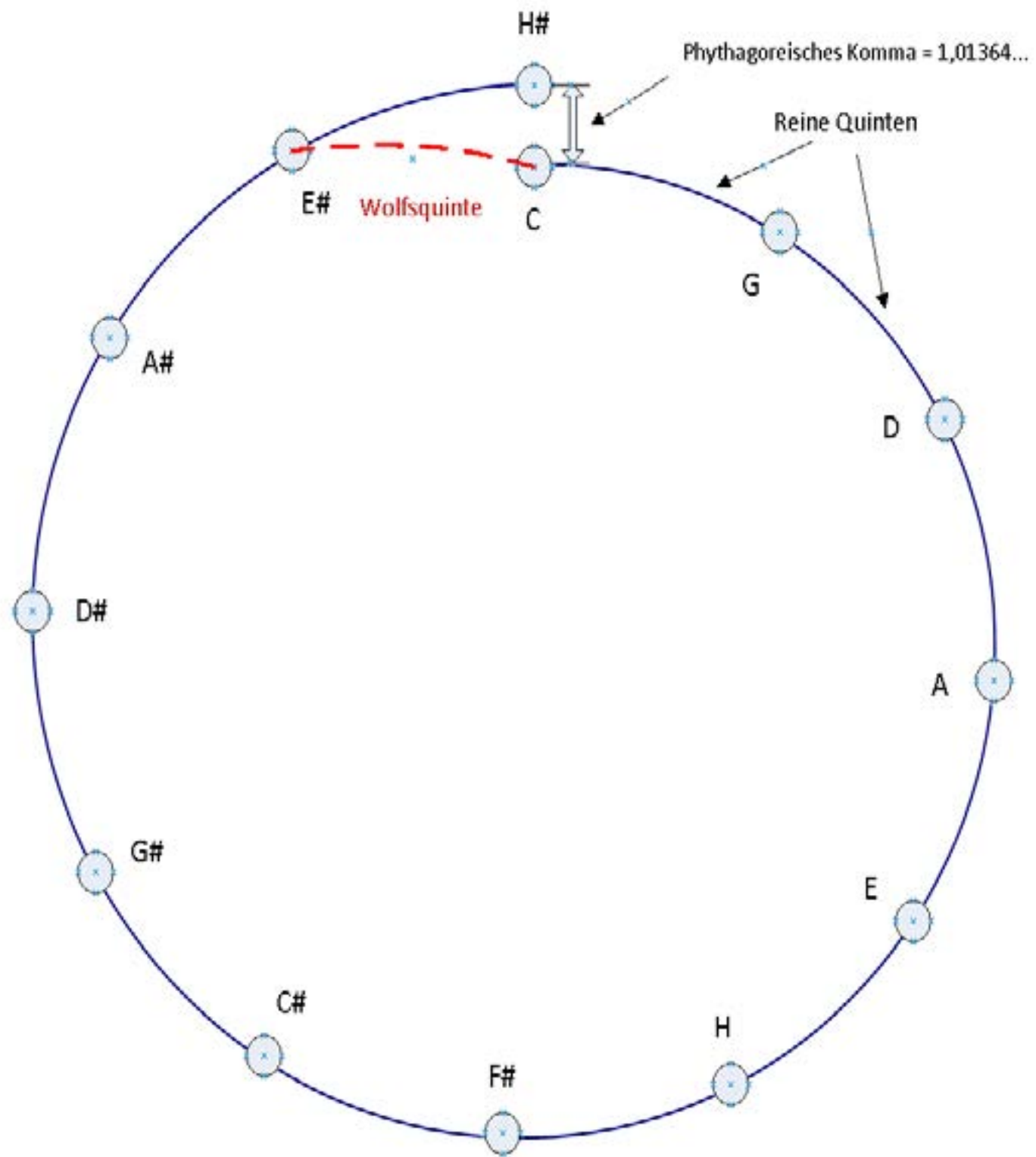


Association space *The Friends of The Wolf Tone*



François Quintin becoming a member of the *The Friends of The Wolf Tone*





Spiral of fifths with wolf fifth



Installing the Wolf Tone



Shot wolf, around 1900

*NOTHING MORE*

Galerie Mehdi Chouakri Berlin  
29.04.2023 - 22.07.2023

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Coal on paper (2023)

in the framework of the exhibition  
*The Coalman* by SAÂDANE AFIF

A work based on the Initial coal drawing for the choir  
piece *Nothing More* (2022) for choir, dealing with the  
voice as a resource.

*NOTHING MORE, coal on paper 2023*

Galerie Mehdi Chouakri Berlin



*Nothing More, coal on paper*

KEPLER'S MI FA MI

Langen Foundation, Neuss  
05.06.2023

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Performance

In the framework of exhibition *Controlled Burn* by  
JULIAN CHARRIÈRE

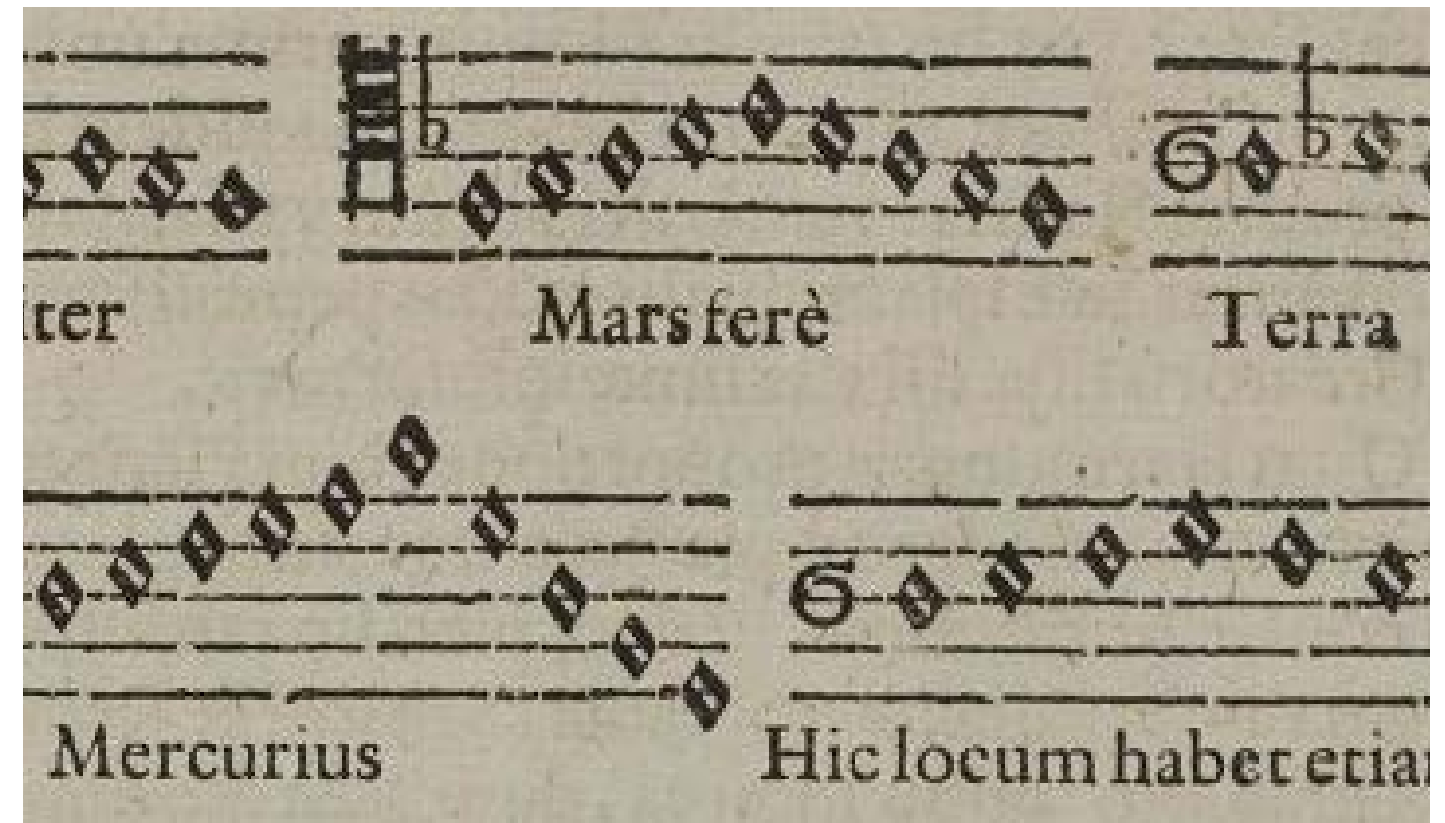
and part of *The Perpetual Canon*, a collaborative  
inquiry into the notion of canon initiated  
by AUGUSTIN MAURS in Berlin studios and  
presented at KW Institute for Contemporary Art  
Berlin in 2021.

*The Earth sings Mi, Fa, Mi: you may infer even from the  
syllables that in this our home MIsery and FAmine hold sway.*  
/ Johannes Kepler, *Harmonices mundi, Fünf Bücher  
über die Harmonik der Welt*, 1619

The project *The Perpetual Canon* looks into the historical  
developments of the term and explores its musical and  
non musical resonance until today. The outcome unfolds  
as an ongoing suite of pieces and practices - a quest for  
other kinds of musical response-ability.

KEPLER'S MI FA MI

Langen Foundation, Neuss



Johannes Kepler, "Die Erde singt Mi Fa Mi"



Julian Charrière, exhibition view



*Motifs from THE PERPETUAL CANON*

Hoffmann Collection, Berlin  
01.06.2023

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Interplay  
For voice, mixed medias and instruments

With  
ELISA STORELLI

<https://vimeo.com/989584265/044b92c413>

<https://kanonqanuncanon.hotglue.me/>

*THE PERPETUAL CANON* is an inquiry into the notion of canon initiated by Augustin Maurs in Berlin studios and presented for the first time at KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin in 2021. In the course of different collaborations and manifestations, the project looks into the historical developments of the term and explores its musical and non musical resonances until today. The outcome unfolds as an ongoing suite of pieces and practices, a quest for other kinds of musical response-ability.

*Motifs from THE PERPETUAL CANON*

Hoffmann Collection, Berlin 2023



## NOTHING MORE

Bergen Assembly  
08.09.2022 – 06.11.2022

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Composition for Choir and organ,  
Bergen Cathedral

Mixed Media Installation,  
Gyldenpris Kunsthall

With  
THE VOLVEVOKAL CHOIR,  
THEA MEIDELL SJULE (Conductor)  
SIGURD ØGAARD (Organ)  
ROAR SLETTE LAND (Mixed Media Installation)

Curated by  
SAÂDANE AFIF / JASMINE D'O

[https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/  
nothing-more-2022-for-choir-and-organ-part-4-  
open-end-in-a](https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/nothing-more-2022-for-choir-and-organ-part-4-open-end-in-a)

Augustin Maurs explores the conditions of our musicality. For *Nothing More* (2022), he spent time at Svalbard in the Norwegian archipelago, walking on ice that is millions of years old and contemplating the relationship between musical and geological time. In a process of composition and decomposition that incorporates non-musical elements, as well as techniques of repetition, decontextualisation, and togetherness, *Nothing More* is a “manifestation” for voices and organ, collaboratively developed by Volve Vokal choir, Thea Meidell Sjule, Roar Sletteland, Sigurd Øgaard, and Maurs. Presented in the framework of the Coalman, the possibility of the voice as a source of both sonic and political resilience is explored *Nothing More*. The composition’s title is inspired by philosopher Mladen Dolar’s book *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), which sees the voice as a core component of the social fabric and political realisation. Following this notion, *Nothing More* plays with the upper and lower limits of the voice, and with a sense of stretching and changing the register of time; it can be seen as a musical exploration of surplus and lack, alongside political voicing in environments of vulnerability, labour, freedom, and solidarity.

A project in collaboration with Domkirken Cathedral and BEK – Bergen Centre for Electronic Arts. With the kind support of City of Bergen, Arts Council Norway, ifa, Institut Français

## NOTHING MORE

Bergen Assembly 2022



Volve Vokal Choir



NOTHING MORE

Bergen Asembly 2022



AUGUSTIN MAURS  
**NOTHING MORE** (FOR VOICES AND ORGAN), 2022  
 IN COLLABORATION WITH THE VOLVE VOKAL CHOIR  
 THEA MEIDELL SJULE (CONDUCTOR) - SIGURD ØGAARD (ORGAN)  
 DOMKIRKEN CATHEDRAL, BERGEN, SEPTEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2022  
 FOR YASMINE AND THE SEVEN FACES OF THE HEPTAHEDRON

NOTHING MORE

Bergen Assembly 2022

BORE

ACTUAL TIME 8:00:00 PM 8:02:00 PM 8:07:00 PM 8:13:00 PM 8:14:30 PM

DOMINO TEXTURE  
 as high as possible

STATIC TEXTURE

DYNAMIC TEXTURE

VOICES as low as possible

U  
N  
I  
S  
O  
N

DUO ON BORE/ED



bore, buron, beran, bora, borra, boron, boren  
 voices forced into extreme registers  
 contagious rhymes



Alveolar (o)R

ORGAN variations on low and high



BAICIA PER AVER VITA  
 [I kissed in order to have life],  
 (Vittoria Raffaella Aleotti)

WARMTH

APPROX. TIME

LENT ET RÉVEUR

TEMPO FORMATIONS

LES SOIRS ILLUMINÉS PAR L'ARDEUR DU CHARBON (Claude Debussy)



VOICES

like the sound of a fire



SOLO



ORGAN

KRISTINE	+30 (474 Hz)
KRISTINE	-47 (453 Hz)
THEA	-47 (453 Hz)
HEDDA	+47 (426 Hz)
CHRISTINA	-10 (391 Hz)
INVILD	-10 (391 Hz)
RANVEIG	-16 (366 Hz)
KAJA	-16 (366 Hz)
MALIN	+41 (357 Hz)
GUDRUN	-45 (340 Hz)
VILIA	+49 (320 Hz)
BIRTE	+49 (320 Hz)
EMILIE	-28 (306 Hz)
MILENA	+45 (284 Hz)
INGRID	I've got corona

—Est-il possible que vous n'ayez plus de charbon ? Et après avoir souffert de froid va-t-il falloir mourir de faim ? [Is it possible that you have no more coal? After suffering from the cold, will one have to die of hunger?] Claude Debussy to M. Croquin, his coal merchant, 8 May 1917—





NOTHING MORE, Gyldenpris Kunsthall, Bergen



NOTHING MORE, Gyldenpris Kunsthall, Bergen



DIARY

## STRANGER THAN FICTION

Agnieszka Gratza at LIAF and the 2022 Bergen Assembly

September 21, 2022 • Bodø, Bergen

a letter Yasmine had given to her at the train station.

Having three artists/collectives to a venue shows an unusual awareness of the average biennialgoer's attention span. The first of the seven venues we visited at a leisurely pace over the next couple of days turned out to be my favorite. "The Coalman," at the outlying Gyldenpris Kunsthall, pairs works by two composers—one dead (Claude Debussy), one alive (Augustin Maurs)—with mostly anonymous sculptures and low reliefs carved in coal by miners who mostly hail from Silesia, Poland's coalmining region. Interpreted live at the opening, Debussy's last composition for piano, *Les Soirs illumines par l'ardeur du charbon* ("Evenings Lit by the Burning Coals"), written in exchange for a bag of coal in the winter of 1917, cast a melancholy note over the proceedings. Maurs's own haunting composition *Nothing More*, which arose in the context of a residency on Svalbard—Norway's northernmost archipelago, where coalmining is about to become a thing of the past—premiered the following evening at Bergen Cathedral. Performed by an all-female choir and the composer himself, seated amid the audience, it stole the show.

— Agnieszka Gratza



## TARANTELLA

Gropius Bau Berlin 2021  
10.3.2021 - 14.03. 2021

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Performance-Installation  
(Postponed due to COVID)

Tarantella — Music and Dancing Mania for tambourine and voice(s) is an ongoing composition by Augustin Maurs based on the original 6/8 tarantella rhythmical pattern and processed in a gradual increase of dynamics. The composition incorporates a dancing mania celebration open for spontaneous participation. The tarantella is a dance from South-Italy and Sicily originally embedded in a therapeutical ritual meant to heal the envenomation of the bite of a spider, the tarantula. Suffering from heightened excitability and restlessness, the (mostly female) victims of the bite would fall in a frenzied dancing trance provoked through the throbbing music of the tarantella, played by violins guitars and tambourines. The ritual could last several hours or even days before the cured participants were brought back to normal life.

Augustin Maurs is inviting to a tarantella. A healing ritual and perhaps one of the first, last, and perhaps only western collective trance occurrences. What is now an Italian ternary folk music with tambourines, violins, dances and regional variations appeared as a magical-religious rite in Southern Italy of the early Middle Ages. The tarantella was then a cure to tarantism, a profound state of lethargy/lethargic affliction that was believed to be caused by the bite of the lycosa tarantula spider, as such states affected peasants - mainly women - on hot summer days during harvest. The troubles were canalised by a fast upbeat music soliciting frenzied dances performed in solo or in groups that could last for hours, even days, and brought the tarantulees' possessed bodies back to vitality. Happening in times of hardship and superstition, the origins of such dancing manias remains obscure, as the bite of the tarantula is known as harmless for humans. Some describe such moments of prodigious expenditure as the resurgence of Bacchanalian rites that were suppressed in 186 BC by the Roman Senate, others as a pretext to transgressive suggestive choreographies at a time where dance was proscribed by Canon law. Thirds attribute it to the psychoactive effects of the ergot of rye.

## TARANTELLA

Gropius Bau 2019

la più lunga possibile  
la più rapida possibile  
la più alta possibile  
la più fedele possibile  
la più infedele possibile  
la più muta possibile  
la più folle possibile  
la più sapiente possibile  
la più nera possibile  
la più santa possibile  
la più pelosa possibile  
la più sospesa possibile  
la più bassa possibile  
la più dimenticata possibile  
la più intossicata possibile  
la più dannata possibile  
la più caduta possibile  
la più devota possibile  
la più bianca possibile  
la più folle possibile  
la più muta possibile  
la più nera possibile  
la più santa possibile  
la più pelosa possibile  
la più sospesa possibile  
la più bassa possibile  
la più lunga possibile  
la più dannata possibile

QAsualties on Mi and Fa

KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin  
16.II.2021

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Performance

Part of *The Perpetual Canon*, a collaborative inquiry into the notion of canon initiated by AUGUSTIN MAURS in Berlin studios and presented at KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin in 2021.

<https://vimeo.com/653224167>

QAsualties on Mi and Fa, for Voice, microtonal tuba, analog synth is a memory oriented practice based on the notes E and F, (Mi et Fa) referring to a quote by Johannes Kepler:

“The Earth sings Mi, Fa, Mi: you may infer even from the syllables that in this our home MISery and FAMine hold sway” (Harmonices mundi, Fünf Bücher über die Harmonik der Welt“), 1619. The text is extracted from the reddit thread “QAnon Casualties”.

The project *The Perpetual Canon* looks into the historical developments of the term and explores its musical and non musical resonance until today. The outcome unfolds as an ongoing suite of pieces and practices - a quest for other kinds of musical response-ability.

QAsualties on Mi and Fa

Galerie Barbara Thumm





SCHIZOPHRENIA – The Score

Galerie Barbara Thumm  
2021

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Virtual installation & Concert

Curated by  
CLEMENTINE DELISS

<https://newviewings.de/shows/new-viewings-32/augustin-maurs/>

The starting point for this score (actually a series of scores) was a found document, the “Transcription of the Phonogram of a Schizophrenic”, a music sheet transcribing the recorded chanting of an anonymous psychiatric patient in Germany in 1899. The piece brings the document through different and delirious states of notation, performance and capture – from the lost ‘phonographic mise-en-scène’ undertaken by the patient to its inscription on the white walls of the gallery, which has become virtual. The transcription is no longer that of an isolated, anonymous patient, but of schizophrenia herself; the world, me.

SCHIZOPHRENIA – The Score

Galerie Barbara Thumm



Exhibition views

*DIE WELT DIE WELT DIE WELT*  
*(a tarantella)*

Index Foundation, Stockholm  
 18.10.2019 - 19.10.2019

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Performance

Curated by  
 ANNIKA LARSSON

Tarantella — Music and Dancing Mania for tambourine and voice(s) is an ongoing composition by Augustin Maurs based on the original 6/8 tarantella rhythmical pattern and processed in a gradual increase of dynamics. The composition incorporates a dancing mania celebration open for spontaneous participation. The tarantella is a dance from South-Italy and Sicily originally embedded in a therapeutical ritual meant to heal the envenomation of the bite of a spider, the tarantula. Suffering from heightened excitability and restlessness, the (mostly female) victims of the bite would fall in a frenzied dancing trance provoked through the throbbing music of the tarantella, played by violins guitars and tambourines. The ritual could last several hours or even days before the cured participants were brought back to normal life.

This event is part of “Non-knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image” artistic research project led by Annika Larsson. The project is funded by the Swedish Research Council and done in collaboration with The Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and the HFBK – Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg.

*DIE WELT DIE WELT DIE WELT*

Index Foundation, Stockholm



*die Welt die Welt die Welt die Welt*



*OUT OF TUNE - Favourite songs of dictators*33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts  
07.06.2019 - 29.09.2019

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical Performance(s)

Curated by

SLAVS AND TATARS

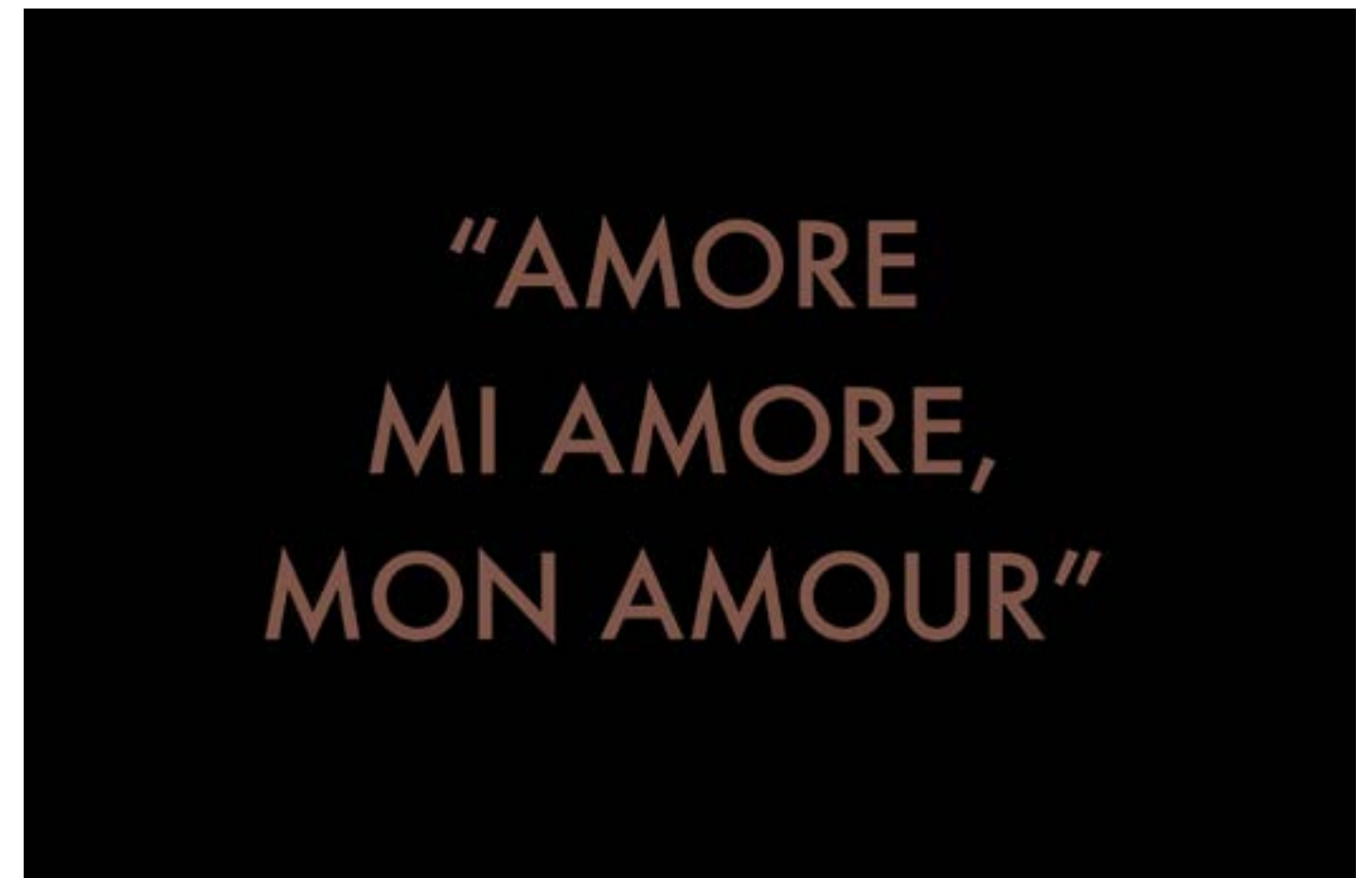
OUT OF TUNE is a parodic concert based on songs that have been used, abused, and co-opted by ruling powers or performed by political leaders. Forming a "repertoire" of different styles, countries and periods, the songs are sometimes left in their original versions, sometimes deconstructed or extended, and assembled into a full-length narrative set in a historical variety theatre, the Orpheum in Graz. Although not a singer per se, Augustin Maurs steps into the role of an irresolute cabaret artist, putting the act of singing to a sort of test in musical-political affect.

While some songs specifically trigger national roots or feelings, many are flowery sentimental, or just entertaining, whereas some render the state of mind of their infamous worshippers in an almost caricatural manner, e.g. "My Way", reportedly played in a loop by the Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević in his prison cell in The Hague after being indicted for war crimes. Not a few of the songs have also been or are still being sang in public by world leaders in office, in exuberant, or contrite performances painstakingly embodying their limitless propensity for denial.

The expression "out of tune" as used in the title can thus be taken quite literally, as a re-enchantment, or a need to undo, mechanisms of appropriation, while looking into interconnections between popular, populist, and totalitarian forces.

*OUT OF TUNE*

33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts



BEING OUT OF TUNE

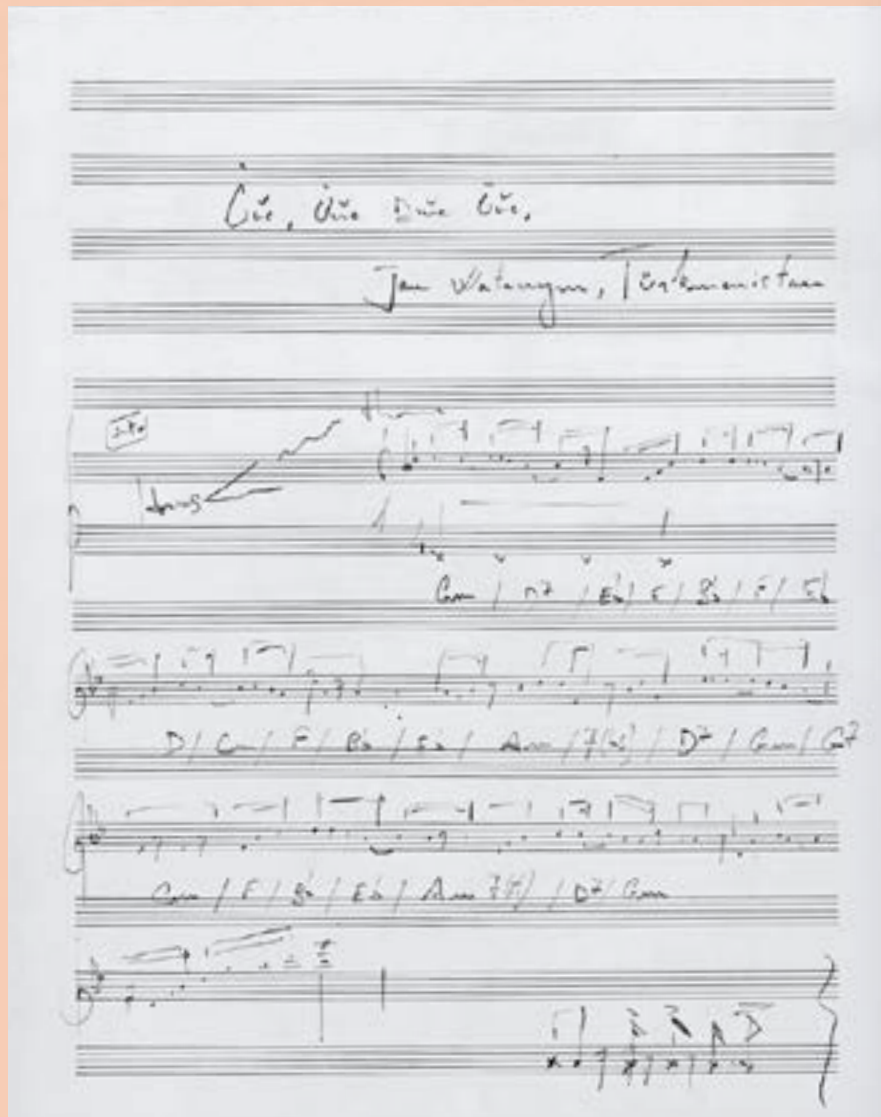
**ÖNE, ÖNE DIÑE ÖNE JAN  
WATANYM TÜRKMENISTANYM**

Hormatly Prezidentimiz Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow  
Öne, öne diñe öne jan Watanym Türkmenistany!

Parahatlyk-ýürek baydagy  
Älem-jahan mähir mukamy  
Türkmenistan bahar baýramy  
Türkmenistan dostluk mekany.

Öne, öne diñe öne jan Watanym Türkmenistany!

Ajap eýýam, ajap çagym bar,  
Ýalkym saçyan şamçyragym bar  
Hak sylamyş Beyik Gerçeğiň  
Gahryman halkymyz bar.



SETLIST

**Meglio 'na Canzone**  
(Silvio Berlusconi and Mariano Apicella, Italy)  
Frequently performed by Silvio Berlusconi.

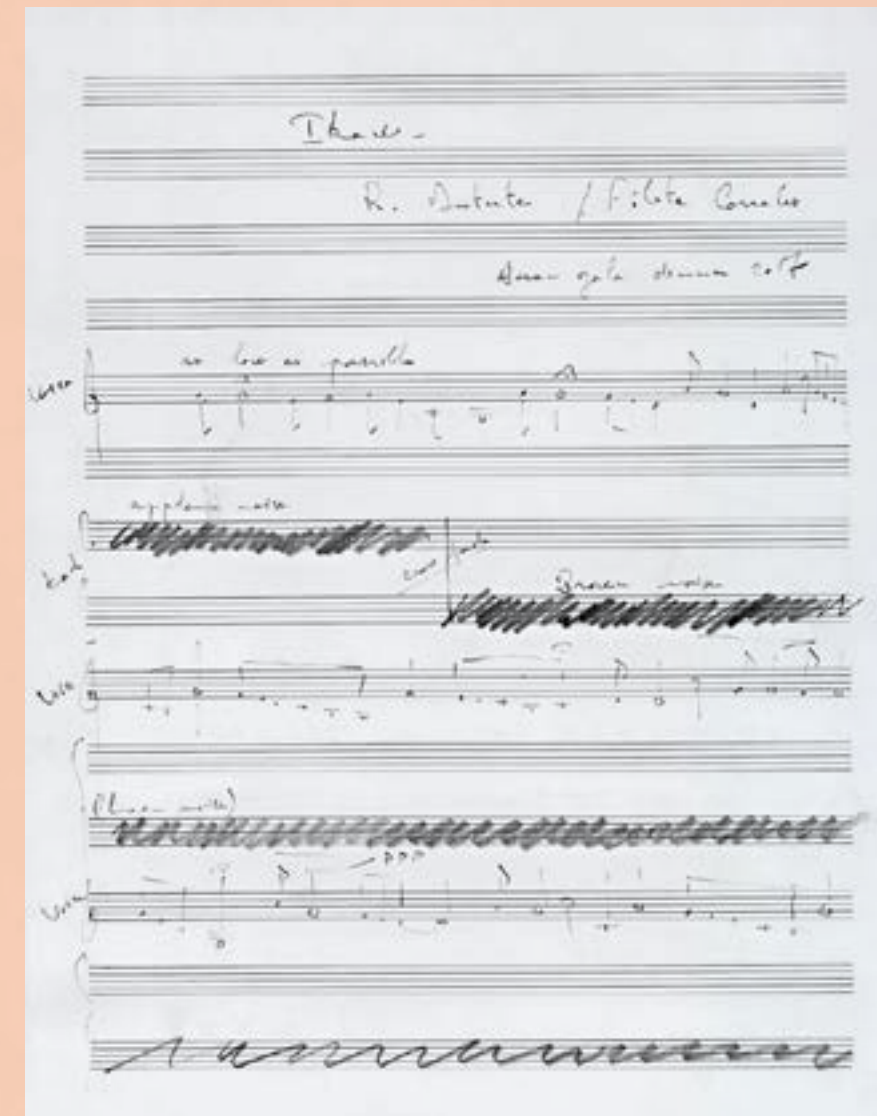
**Öne, öne diñe öne jan Watanym Türkmenistany**  
(Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, Turkmenistan)  
Composed and performed by the president of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. A choir of 4,166 people broke a world record by singing this song in a choreographed show in Turkmenistan, 2015.

**Ikaw**  
(Pilita Corrales, Philippines)  
Performed by Rodrigo Duterte in a duet with Pilita Corrales at Donald Trump's request during the ASEAN Summit in Manila, 2017.

AUGUSTIN MAURS

**IKAW**

Ikaw ang bigay ng maykapal  
Tugon sa aking dasal  
Upang sa lahat ng panahon  
Bawat pagkakataon  
Ang ibigin ko'y ikaw  
Ikaw ang tanglaw sa 'king mundo  
Kabiyak nitong puso ko  
Wala ni kahati mang saglit  
Na sa yo'y maipapalit  
Ngayo't kailanma'y ikaw  
Ang lahat ng aking galaw  
Ang sanhi ay ikaw  
Kung may bukas mang tinatanaw  
Dahil may isang ikaw  
Kulang ang magpakailan pa man  
Upang bawat sandali ay  
Upang muli't muli ay  
Ang mahalín ay ikaw



**Awara Hoon**  
(Raj Kapoor, India)  
Reportedly Mao Zedong's favourite song.

**Blutrote Rosen**  
(Austin Egen, Germany)  
A favourite song of Adolf Hitler.

**My Way**  
(Frank Sinatra, U.S.)  
The song that Slobodan Milošević repeatedly listened to while detained for war crimes in The Hague.

**Blueberry Hill**  
(Fats Domino, U.S.)  
Performed by Vladimir Putin during a charity event in Saint Petersburg, 2010.

**Сулуро (Suliko)**  
(old Georgian folk song)  
Joseph Stalin's favourite song.



## MARS SONG

Haus am Lützowplatz,  
11.08. 2019

AUGUSTIN MAURS in collaboration with  
ELISA STORELLI, CONSTANTIN ENGELMANN  
AMELIE BAIER

## Musical Performace

The imaginary field recording coming from the speakers reproduces a windy atmosphere. The sound is based on algorithms derived from the weather model by Laboratoire de Météorologie Dynamique, IPSL Mars Climate Database. From the wind emerges a genderless voice, describing an imaginary stay on the planet.

Live, a mezzosopranist and a synth interact and dialogue with each other based on a canonic exercise by Augustin Maurs: the singer should reproduce three times, as accurately as she can, the sounds and pauses emitted by the synth. However, as the synth player plays more sounds than she could actually remember, this creates a composition based on human error, or imagination.

Mars is our planet of imagination. What we don't seem feasible on earth we often project into a fictional narrative involving our fellow neighbour Mars. Throughout recent history we created maps, calendars, collected pictures or weather data of this planet. One could assume we seem to know it quite well. Just that we still don't really know - what does it sound like on mars?

## MARS SONG

Haus am Lützowplatz, 2019





*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Beishan Broadcast Wall, Kinmen Island, Taiwan  
26.08.2018

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Concert Installation  
For voices and propaganda loudspeakers

In the frame of *Sonic Territories*, an art project initiated  
by AUGUTIN MAURS and ADA KAI TING YANG

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=hrwUZwHNRLY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrwUZwHNRLY)

*... I'm talking about if only I could talk. (Leif Elggren) - I want  
what I want to say to go without saying. (Martin Creed) - I  
have nothing to say, ask anyone. (Abramovic & Ulay) - I speak  
for the aphasic, I write for the illiterate. (Antonin Artaud)  
- I am a silent worker. (The Silent Worker) - There is no  
silence, your mind makes noise. (Bruce Nauman) - News for  
nobody. (Anonymous) - Seventeen silences in 6 minutes and  
20 seconds. (Emma González) - I feel like talking but I have  
nothing to say. (Michael Snow) - The word silence is still a  
noise. (Georges Bataille) - Nothing that is said is true (Susan  
Sontag)...*

Conceived for the monumental Beishan Broadcasting  
Wall in Taiwan, a former propaganda “loudspeaker  
wall”. The piece is based on a selection of quotes on  
silence and muteness – in the vein of John Cage’s  
notorious statement “I have nothing to say and I am  
saying it”. It deals with the sonic affects of propaganda  
and the often related traumas through the question of  
“what cannot be said”. Non-professional singers sing  
the quotes in their native language, one by one and  
through simple and short a cappella melodies.

The text is composed of a selection of quotes on silence  
and muteness - in the vein of John Cage’s notorious  
statement “I have nothing to say and I am saying it”.  
It deals with the sonic monumentality of propaganda  
and the often related traumas through the question of  
“what cannot be said”. Non-professional singers sing  
the quotes in their native language, one by one and  
through simple and short a cappella melodies.  
The soundtrack can be performed live, broadcasted or  
played back.

*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Beishan Broadcast Wall, Kinmen Island, Taiwan



Beishan Broadcast Wall



*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Beishan Broadcast Wall, Kinmen Island, Taiwan



Kinmen County Choir

*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Beishan Broadcast Wall, Kinmen Island, Taiwan



Beishan Broadcast Wall



*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Busan Biennale  
08.09.2018 - 11.11.2018

AUGUSTIN MAURS

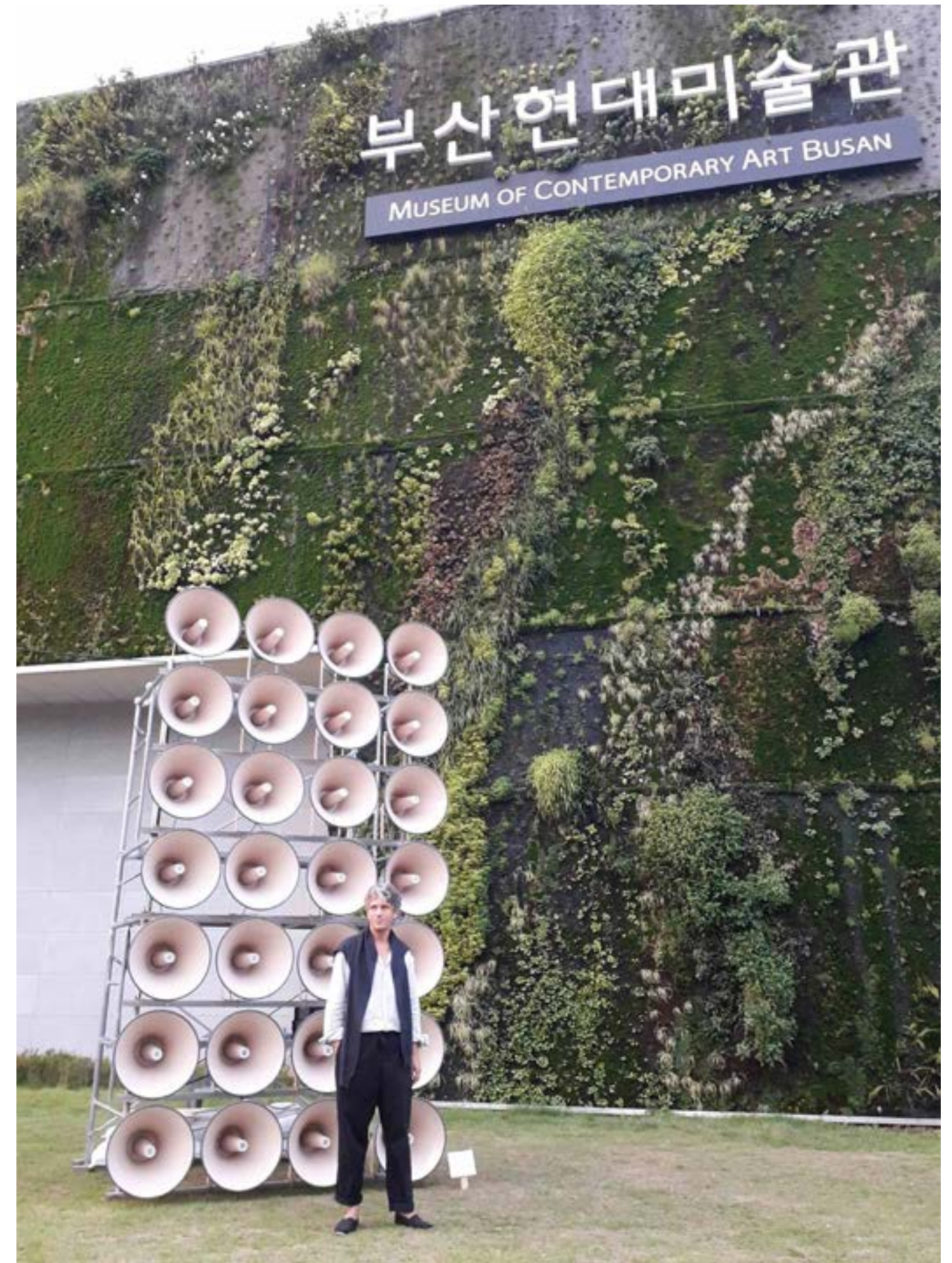
Sound-Installation  
For voices and propaganda loudspeakers

Curated by  
JÖRG HEISER and GAHEE PARK  
Artistic Director CRISTINA RICUPERO

This sonic sculpture departs from a selection of quotes on silence and muteness - in the vein of John Cage's notorious statement "I have nothing to say and I am saying it". It deals with the violent potential of propaganda and the often related traumas through the question of "what cannot be said". The quotes are sung as simple and short a cappella melodies and broadcasted through a series of "horn loudspeakers" (basic loudspeakers used for announcements or propaganda) held by a wall-shaped structure. The soundtrack can be performed live, broadcasted or played back in a loop.

*I HAVE NO WORDS*

Busan Biennale





*TARANTELLA – Music and Dancing Mania*

artgenève-Villa Sarasin, Geneva,  
02.02.2018

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Music Performance

With

LOUIS-PHILIPPE SCOUFARAS  
and special guests

*Tarantella – Music and Dancing Mania* is a 90 min noise-music composition by Augustin Maurs and Louis-Philippe Scoufaras based on the original 6/8 tarantella rhythmical pattern and processed in a gradual increase of dynamics. The composition incorporates a dancing mania celebration open for spontaneous participation.

The tarantella is a dance from South-Italy and Sicily originally embedded in a therapeutical ritual meant to heal the envenomation of the bite of a spider, the tarantula. Suffering from heightened excitability and restlessness, the (mostly female) victims of the bite would fall in a frenzied dancing trance provoked through the throbbing music of the tarantella, played by violins guitars and tambourines. The ritual could last several hours or even days before the cured participants were brought back to normal life.

*Tarantella—Music and Dancing Mania*

artgenève-Villa Sarasin, Geneva



as fast as possible  
as fast as possible  
as fast as possible  
as loud as possible  
as twisted as possible  
as throbed as possible  
as fazy as possible  
as fuzzy as possible  
as fly as possible  
as frode as possible  
as frow as possible  
as fake as possible  
as fake as possible  
as date as possible  
as high as possible  
as high as possible

as hard as possible  
as mad as possible  
as damn as possible  
as dam as possible  
as divide as possible  
as dived as possible  
as shaker as possible  
as shaker as possible  
as shored as possible  
as follow as possible  
as for give as possible  
as lit as possible  
as liked as possible  
as liked as possible  
as exposed as possible



## THE DILIJAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin,  
28.4.-26.8.2018

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Installation & Concert

With

HILARY JEFFERY (trombone)  
TISHA MUKARJI (piano)

Curated by

CLÉMENTINE CELISS as part of *Hello Hello World*  
- *Revising a Collection*

Based on memories, documents and experiences  
collected during the Dilijan Arts Observatory in  
Armenia.

Voici ce que nous avons vu, transcrit, transposé (c'est à  
dire, ce à quoi nous avons échappé):

des palissades de pierres roses,  
des espaces monumentaux, des antres de ferraille,  
des graines de plastique vert,  
des excavations sonores, des machines parlantes,  
des arbres fruitiers,  
des herbes rares,  
29 mètres de papier carton roulé sur des notations  
plastifiées,  
des tomates protéiformes oubliées du packaging,  
des taxis hurlants du Rabiz,  
des circuits imprimés par des milliers de mains  
diligentes,  
des caisses en bois aux séparations binaires,  
des toilettes communes en faux marbre sans séparation,  
des portes qui se verrouillent toutes seules,

Nous avons vu des vieux à la coquetterie et à la  
désillusion intactes, des mémoires vivantes qui  
piétinent nos horizons.

Ici, alors que notre regard transformait l'oubli en passé  
(mais pourquoi ?), c'est aussi nous mêmes qui nous  
sommes apparus, autres. Faiseurs de perspectives,  
par peur de Pinar trop près, nous avons retrouvé nos  
superstitions, entendu des voix, des bruits, des chants.  
Nous avons brandi nos prothèses, au risque toujours de  
nous séparer du savoir. Nous avons tissé, en trébuchant  
sur notre amour hérité de l'utile, jusque dans les  
retranchements de notre propre inutilité.

(Augustin Maurs, for Impuls Kondensator, Dilijan 2016)

## THE DILIJAN TRANSCRIPTIONS

Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin





Art Basel Parcours Night  
16.06.2018

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in collaboration with JEAN PASCAL FLAVIEN

Composition & Music Performance

With  
RICARDO FRENZEL BAUDISCH, tenor

<https://vimeo.com/275696899>

The presentation of Jean Pascal Flavien's vacation house takes the form of a musical. Located at the offices of a real estate agency Engel & Völkers in Basel, with part of the staff in their working environment, the event includes the opera singer Ricardo Frenzel Baudisch. The performance takes the form of a sales pitch—the libretto was written in collaboration with Julien Bismuth—the standard language of a business proposal with a description of the house—its specific location, properties and amenities, similar to the protocol I produce for all the houses. The song consists of individual short sections, always beginning with the direct contact with a potential customer. The musical score was written by the French musician and composer Augustin Maurs, whom previously collaborated on the record statement house.

The musical performance extends the project of combining elements from architecture, sculpture, and the performative, transforming the inhabitants from earlier projects into an active presenter-doubling perhaps as interpreter, author figure, and spokesperson for the house. The event draws on the narrative tradition of the French musical, exemplified by the 1964 classic "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg".

The house presented in the course of the musical performance is entitled vacation house—described as a distant place, the house is said to both be a site of vacation as well as a site on vacation from us.



Ricardo Frenzel Baudisch

49  
Voice

52  
Voice

56 On B - C whispering (reading?)  
Voice

*You're elsewhere, resting. There are no windows in that middle space.  
There will be window panes here, on the lower level, in this corner here.  
I think of this lower level as a terrace, a playing field, or a tongue.  
And this space here, the third and highest level, is the viewing terrace.  
**You can look at the view or the sky or the stars. You can watch as the weather shifts, progresses.**  
When I look up at the sky, I forget about my surroundings, **don't you?** This is a house of elsewheres.  
A house that always leads you away, elsewhere, or a house that always drifts or departs.  
It does as it wants, but does it even want anything? It doesn't need us, doesn't need you or your presence.*

57  
Voice

Notation excerpt



Museu Tàpies, Barcelona  
29.01.2022 & 30.01.2022

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in collaboration with SAÂDANE AFIF

Composition & Concert

In the framework of the Exhibition *The Fountain Archive* by SAÂDANE AFIF

With  
SUSANNE FRÖHLICH, bird bone flutes  
CLAUDIA VAN HASSELT, mezzo-soprano

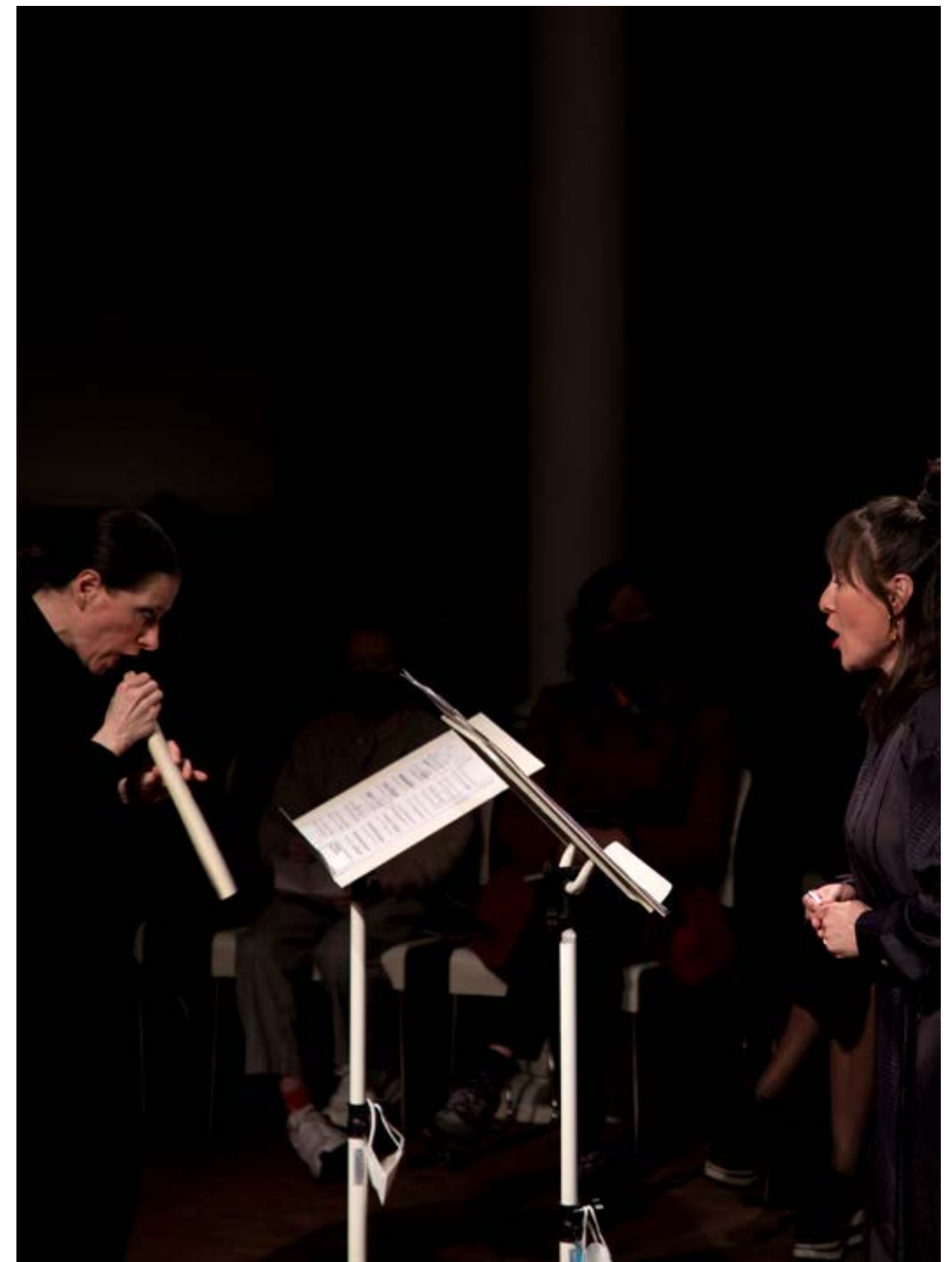
[https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/  
anagram-for-voice-and-bird-bone-flute](https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/anagram-for-voice-and-bird-bone-flute)

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=eQfTZ6TKzgM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQfTZ6TKzgM)

Saadane Afif asked composer Augustin Maurs to produce ten pieces for flute and voice, based on a selection of lyrics commissioned between 2008 and 2017, in relation to the artwork *The Fountain Archives*. Ten flutes were custom made from the bones of different bird species according to the techniques used to make the 35,000 years old flutes found in the Hohle Fels cave in Germany. Those items are considered to be the oldest musical instruments yet discovered. Each of the recreated flute has a specific shape and tone in order to interpret the single and unique text for which it was designed. *Musiques pour tuyauterie* excavates a time tunnel through which melodies born from prehistoric wind instruments cross paths with the songs inspired by the most controversial artwork of our time: *Fountain* (1917) by Marcel Duchamp.

Music by Augustin Maurs  
Words by Sarah Ancelle Schönfeld (6.), Dominique GonzalezFoerster (7.), Jonathan Monk (2.), Lili Reynaud-Dewar (10.), Willem de Rooij (3.), Kilian Rùthemann (5.), Yorgos Sapountzis (1.), Louis-Philippe Scoufaras (4.), Jerszy Seymour (8.), Athena Vida (9.)

Museu Tàpies, Barcelona



Claudia van Hasselt, Suzanne Fröhlich



LYRICS RECORDS  
 LR.009-2019  
**AUGUSTIN MAURS  
 (COMPOSITION)**  
**SUSANNE FRÖHLICH  
 (FLUTE)**  
**CLAUDIA VAN HASSELT  
 (VOICE)**  
*“Musiques pour Tuyauterie”*



*LE PETIT LIVRE-MEURTRE*

artQ13 Gallery, Rome  
16.05.2017

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Installation & Music Performance

With

THE ENSEMBLE EVO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2zmGpMKBGk>

Le petit livre-meurtre (The Little Murder-Book) is a 3,8 × 2,4 cm book consisting in the word “murder” translated in over 200 languages. The musical rendition of the book occurs on specific occasions in the framework of musical collaborations. The first rendition was developed together with the Rome based vocal ensemble EVO.

*LE PETIT LIVRE-MEURTRE*

artQ13 Gallery, Rome



Ensemble Evo



moord

öldürmək

cinayet

מאָרד

pembunuhan

vonoan-olona

kisan

kupha

હત્યા

iku

pepehi

हत्या

હત્યા

ហាតកម្ម

ӨЛТҮРҮҮ

touye moun

ஊலி

ӨЛТІРҮ

살인



HEAVY METAL HERCULES

ABCDLP 006

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in collaboration with ANGELA BULLOCH

Vinyl Record  
Edition of 100

A-SIDE:  
ANGELA BULLOCH & AUGUSTIN MAURS  
HEAVY METAL HERKULES

B-SIDE:  
ANGELA BULLOCH, AUGUSTIN MAURS & LOUIS-  
PHILIPPE SCOUFARAS  
QUARTERLY CLOCK MELODY WITH OVERTONES  
FROM HEAVY METAL HERKULES

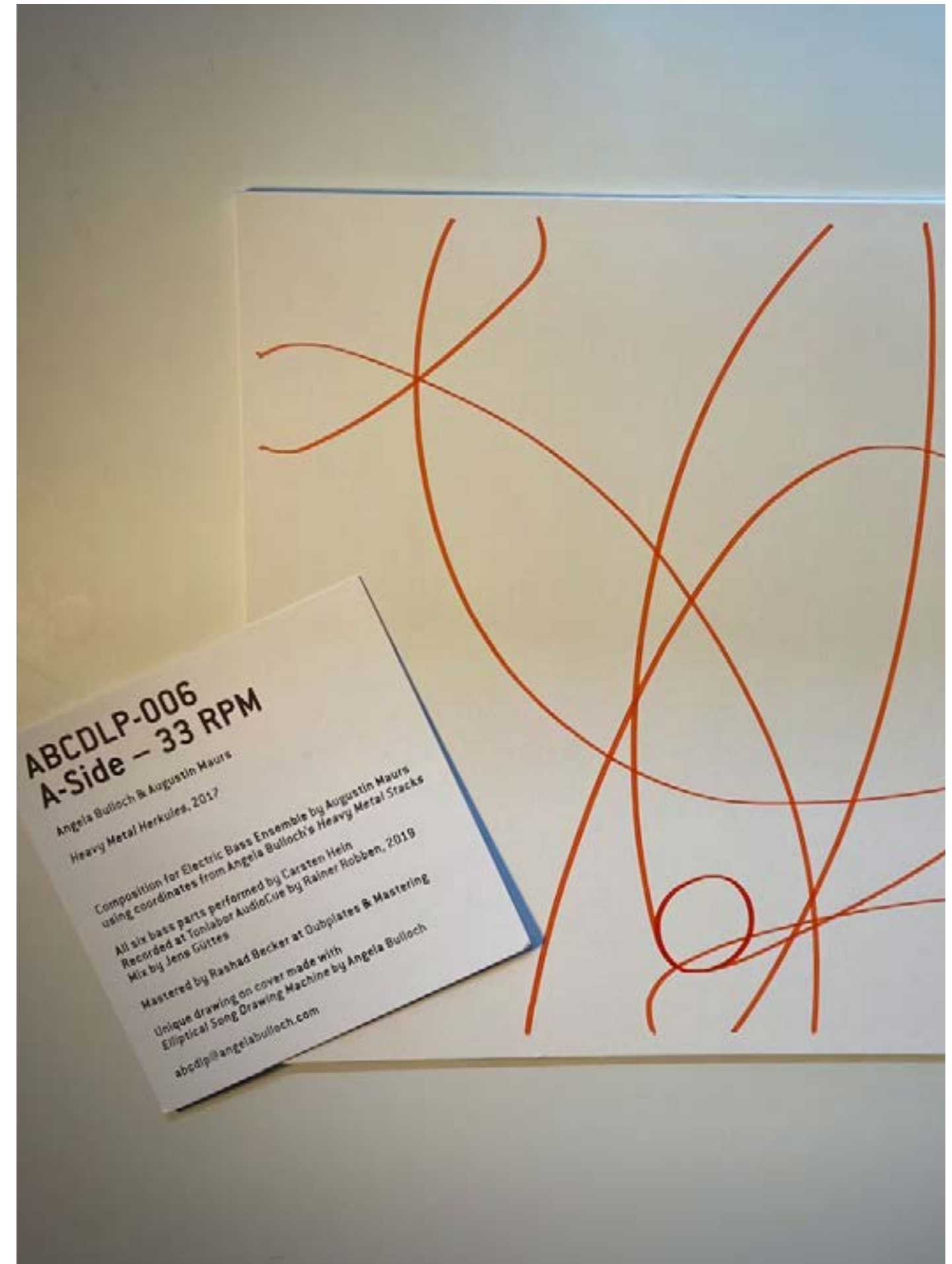
*All six bass parts performed by CARSTEN HEIN*

<https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/heavy-metal-hercules-after-coordinates-from-angela-bulloch-s-heavy-metal-stacks>

Composition for electric bass ensemble by Augustin Maurs using coordinates from Angela Bulloch 's Heavy Metal Stacks, premiered in the framework of Augustin Maurs's project MYTH, MUSIC AND ELECTRICITY in the Herkulessaal in Munich.

HEAVY METAL HERCULES

ABCDLP 006



WATER MUSIC AGAIN

Monaco Nuit Blanche  
29.04.2016

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Composition / Music Performance

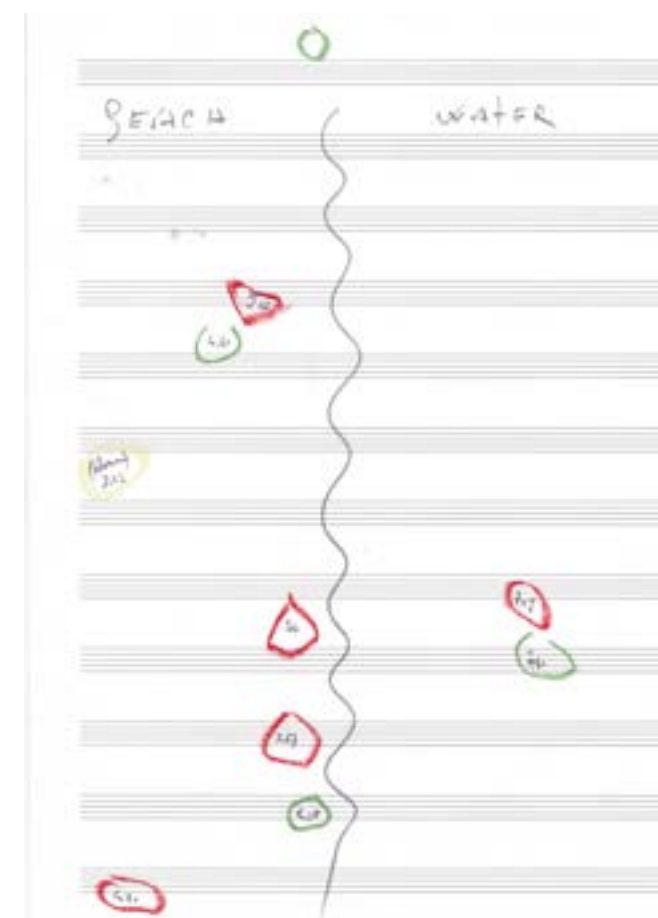
With  
THE BERLIN BRASS ENSEMBLE

The Daily Courant, 19. Juli 1717:  
“On Wednesday Evening, at about 8, the King took Water at Whitehall in an open Barge, wherein were Dutchess of Bolton, The Dutchess of New Castle, the Countess of Godolphin, Madam Kilmaseck, and the Earl of Orkney. And went up the River towards Chelsea. Many other of Barges with Person of Quietly attended, and so the great Number of Boats, that the whole River in a manner was couver'd; a City Company's Barge was employ'd for the Musick, wherein were 50 Instruments of all sorts, Who play'd all the way from Lambeth (while the Barges drove with the Tide without Rowing, as far as Chelsea) the finest Symphonies, compos'd express for this Occasion, by Mr Hendel: which his Majesty liked so well, that he caus'd it to be plained over three times in going and returning. At Eleven his Majesty came again into Barge, and return'd the same Way, the Musick continuing to play till he landed.”

Water Music is a musical moment for brass ensemble, conceived in response to Georg Friedrich Händel's Water Music, an orchestral suite premiered in 1717 during an imposing river procession on the Thames in honor of King George I of Great Britain. An enthusiast of paraphrases and “in situ” artistic approaches, composer Augustin Maurs plays with the sumptuous dimensions of this event, transposed for the occasion to the Monaco Nuit Blanche .

WATER MUSIC AGAIN

Monaco Nuit Blanche





VICE DE FORME

Hamburger Bahnhof  
13. II.2016

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in collaboration with SAÂDANE AFIF

Compostion for cabaret

With  
ANNA CLEMENTI, soprano  
CLEMENS HUND-GÖSCHEL, Piano

Vice de forme: The Cabaret, a work developed by Saâdane Afif together with the composer Augustin Maurs, will be presented in both an opening event Vice de forme (First Notes) and a concert Vice de forme (In Songs) on the last day of the exhibition. A Yamaha player piano will play First Notes, recorded at the opening, during the exhibition.

VICE DE FORME

Hamburger Bahnhof



Concert in Saâdane Afif's exhibition, Hamburger Bahnhof



LYRICS RECORDS  
LR.005-2017  
**AUGUSTIN MAURS  
(COMPOSITION)  
ANNA CLEMENTI  
(VOICE)  
CLEMENS HUND-  
GÖSCHEL  
(PIANO)**  
*“Vice de forme:  
Das Kabarett”*

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Installation & Concerts

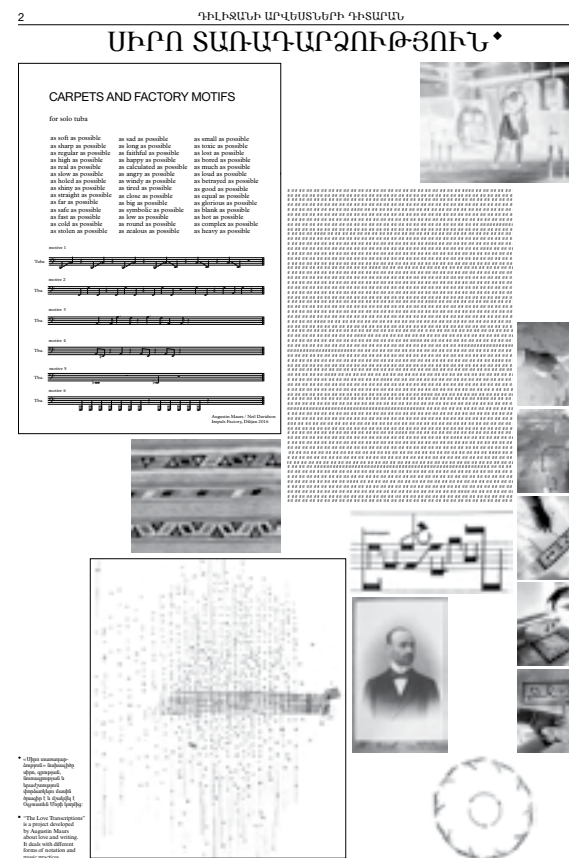
Curated by  
CLEMENTINE DELISS

<https://soundcloud.com/user-958644416/ode-to-mr>

The Dilijan Arts Observatory has been devised by Dr. Clémentine Deliss, an international curator and anthropologist; Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Study in Berlin, former director of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt (2010–15), director of the international research lab Future Academy (2002–09), and publisher of Metronome and Metronome Press (1996–2007).

In the ancient spa town and mountain retreat of Dilijan— which once hosted composers Dmitri Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten—a group of historians and practitioners will undertake fieldwork in the town, working closely with its citizens and identifying local wisdom and folkways. Fieldwork activities will include investigations into memory and transmission, composition and astronomy; Soviet architecture and design; style, crafts, graphics; culinary knowledge; wilderness, botany and future products for survival. The Observatory will take place in Dilijan and neighbouring villages, and will use “Impuls” the former Soviet electronics factory in Dilijan as its headquarters.

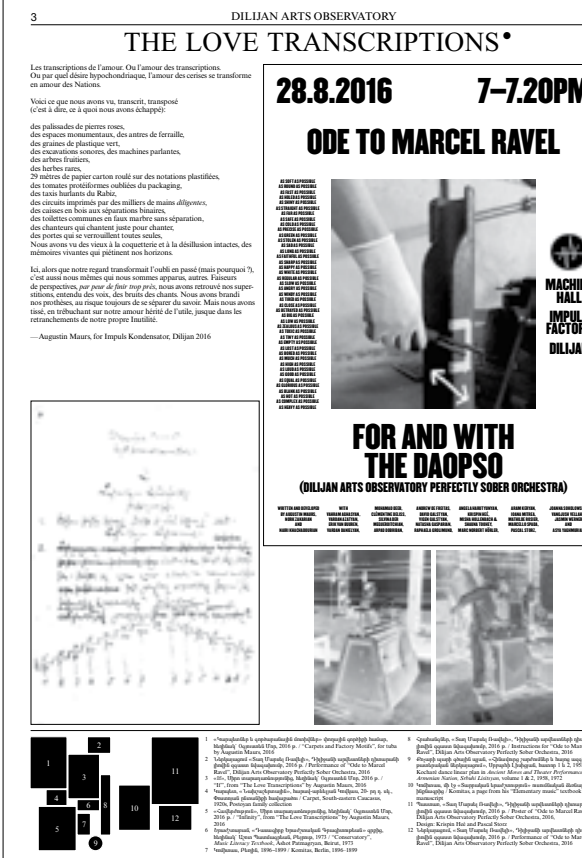
Dilijan Arts Observatory participants are: Vahram Aghasyan (Armenia), Haig Aivazian (Canada), Katerina Chuchalina (Russia), Vardan Danielyan (Armenia), Mohamad Deeb (Lebanon), Clémentine Deliss (GB), Silvina Der Meguerditchian (Armenia), Arpad Dobriban (Germany), Vigen Galstyan (Armenia), Angela Harutyunyan (Armenia), Krispin Heé (Switzerland), Misha Hollenbach, Perks and Mini (Austria), Marianna Hovhannisyian (Armenia), Christoph Keller (Germany), Antje Majewski (Germany), Augustin Mours (France), Ioana Mitrea (Romania), Maria Mkrtchyeva (Russia), Mathilde Rosier (Switzerland), Pascal Storz (Switzerland), Joanna Sokolowska (Poland), Hasmik Ter-Voskanyan (Armenia), Jasmine Werner (Germany), Asya Yaghmurian (Armenia).



Dilijan Arts Observatory Newspaper, music issue



Sound performance by Augustin Mours in the Impuls Factory of Dilijan





## THE LOVE TRANSCRIPTIONS

artQ13 Gallery, Rome  
07.II.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Musical reading

<https://vimeo.com/126194398>

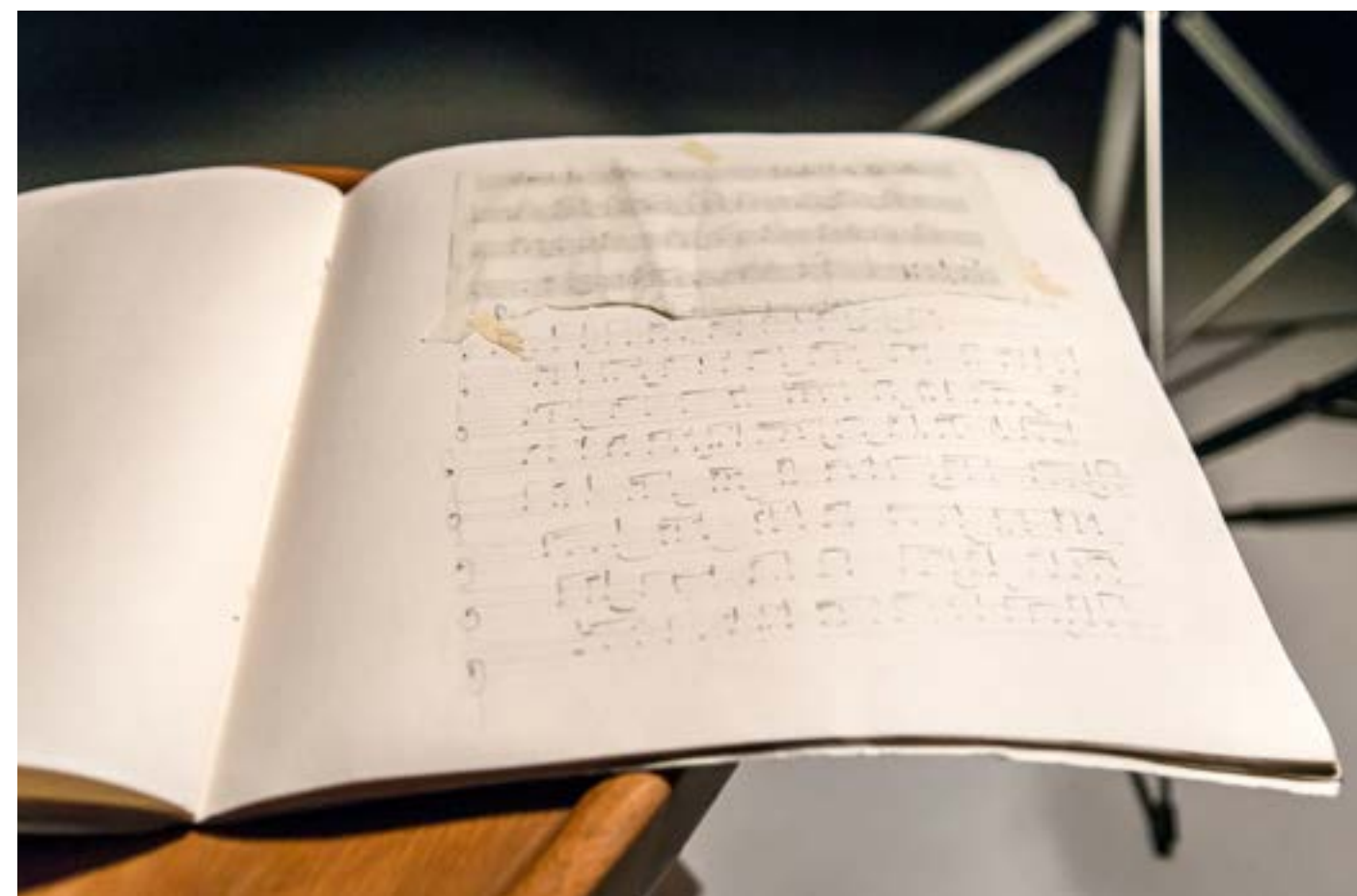
The Love Transcription (the transcriptions of love or the love to transcribe) is an open collection of sonic traces – found, heard or remembered sounds or musical motifs, hastily written down in the wish to be kept, or in the attempt to be forgotten. The incompleteness and futility of the transcriptions makes their musical interpretation or rendition uncertain, remote from any notion of fidelity.

Selected chapters:

- Although the positions of the moving bodies...
- DREAM
- Yes
- How does your work look like in a little box?
- Blue
- (Boredom) IT'S WHAT YOU DO TO ME!
- Nothing's gonna change
- Lord, I'll never ask for more
- Aouh cha cha cha
- Zero time, zero symbolic value, zero tangerine
- (Scelsi) la bemolle
- Blue (more)
- Why f#?

## THE LOVE TRANSCRIPTIONS

artQ13 Gallery, Rome



*DAS ENDE DER WELT*

Natural History Museum, Berlin  
29.II.2015

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in a collaboration with SAÂDANE AFIF

Compsition for choir and percussions

With  
RICARDO FRENZEL BAUDISCH (tenor)  
KATHARINA SCHRAGE (soprano)  
SARAH VAN DER KEMP (soprano)  
YUKA YANAGIHARA (soprano)  
NI FAN (percussion)  
THE LAST ENSEMBLE

<https://vimeo.com/192815934>

Commissioned by Saâdane Afif on the occasion of his exhibition "Das Ende der Welt" at the Berlin Natural History Museum.

The Last Ensemble: Martin Åkesson, Audrey Andrieu, Katharina Beckmann, Nina Berclaz, Cornelius von Bernstorff, Oliver Coleman, Sarah Darwin, Helga Dittmann-Pätsch, Guillaume Doerflinger, Philothée Gaymard, Cornelia Hiller, Hervé Humbert, Sam Kennedy, Cosima zu Knyphausen, Katharina Kritzler, Rüdiger Mangel, Sigrun Meyer, Alberto Piu, Antonio Piu, Cathia Ruf, Marilena Stano, and Renate Wolf.

*DAS ENDE DER WELT*

Natural History Museum, Berlin



Augustin Maurs and The Last Ensemble in the Natural History Museum Berlin



CADENCE

artQ13 Gallery, Rome  
10.10.2017 - 07.11.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Sound performance / Installation

<https://vimeo.com/126220524>

Cadence - "flow of rhythm in verse or music", from old Italian cadenza „conclusion of a movement in music“, from Latin „to fall“, sometimes used literally for " an act of falling".

CADENCE

artQ13 Gallery, Rome



CANONIC PRACTICE

Hoffmann Collection Berlin,  
04.10.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Music performance

With  
KATHARINA SCHRADER

CANONIC PRACTICE

Hoffmann Collection Berlin



26 "Inverted spirale" 3  
Voice

Shorten or continue ad lib.

31  
Voice

Shorten or overlap ad lib.

33 "Inverted spirale"  
Voice

Shorten or overlap ad lib.

38 etc. ad lib.  
Voice

Continue ad lib.

39  
Voice

the earth

Change duration

40  
Voice

the earth

Change duration

41  
Voice

Choose from 3 notes

45  
Voice

gliss over full range

Change curves



*THREE TOASTS TO STOLEN TIME*

AuditoriumArte, Parco della Musica, Rome,  
26.II.2014 - 28.II.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS

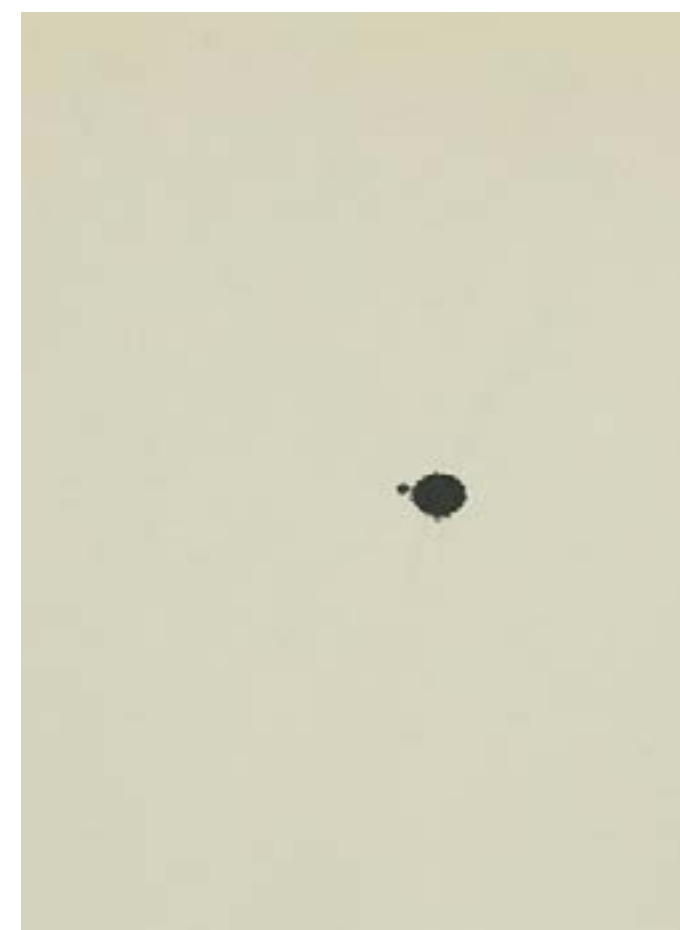
Concert-installation

Curated by  
ANNA CESTELLI GUIDI

If music is traditionally organized through quantifiable time parameters, it is also the evidence of the unquantifiable essence of time. Appearing in the 19th century, the notion of “tempo rubato”, Italian for “stolen time”, precisely evokes the rhythmic freedom taken by the interpreter, the transitory and unmeasurable essence of the musical act. As a musical union between time and space, the “rubato” is inherently singular and irreproducible. It opposes synchronization, which is precisely what enables music to be reproduced. The exploring of this idea of “rubato” transforms the exhibition rooms in a lively space, a space of encounters and experimentations in continuous movement through the combination of an electronic soundtrack and live playing. An assemblage of scores is at the disposal of the musicians and the visitors. This notational inquiry consisting of invented signs, stains and quotes, almost casual poetical events, though denies the actual use of music notation, but rather brings about a reflexion about “given” and stolen time, about music and playing.

*THREE TOASTS TO STOLEN TIME*

AuditoriumArte, Parco della Musica, Rome



SEPT NOTES SUR DE PETER ROEHR

Hebbel am Ufer Theater, Berlin, Teatro Goldoni,  
Venice a.o. venues  
31.10.-1.11.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS  
In collaboration with SAÂDANE AFIF

Compositions / Music Performance

With  
KATHARINA SCHRAGE, soprano, Annerose  
Hummel, soprano

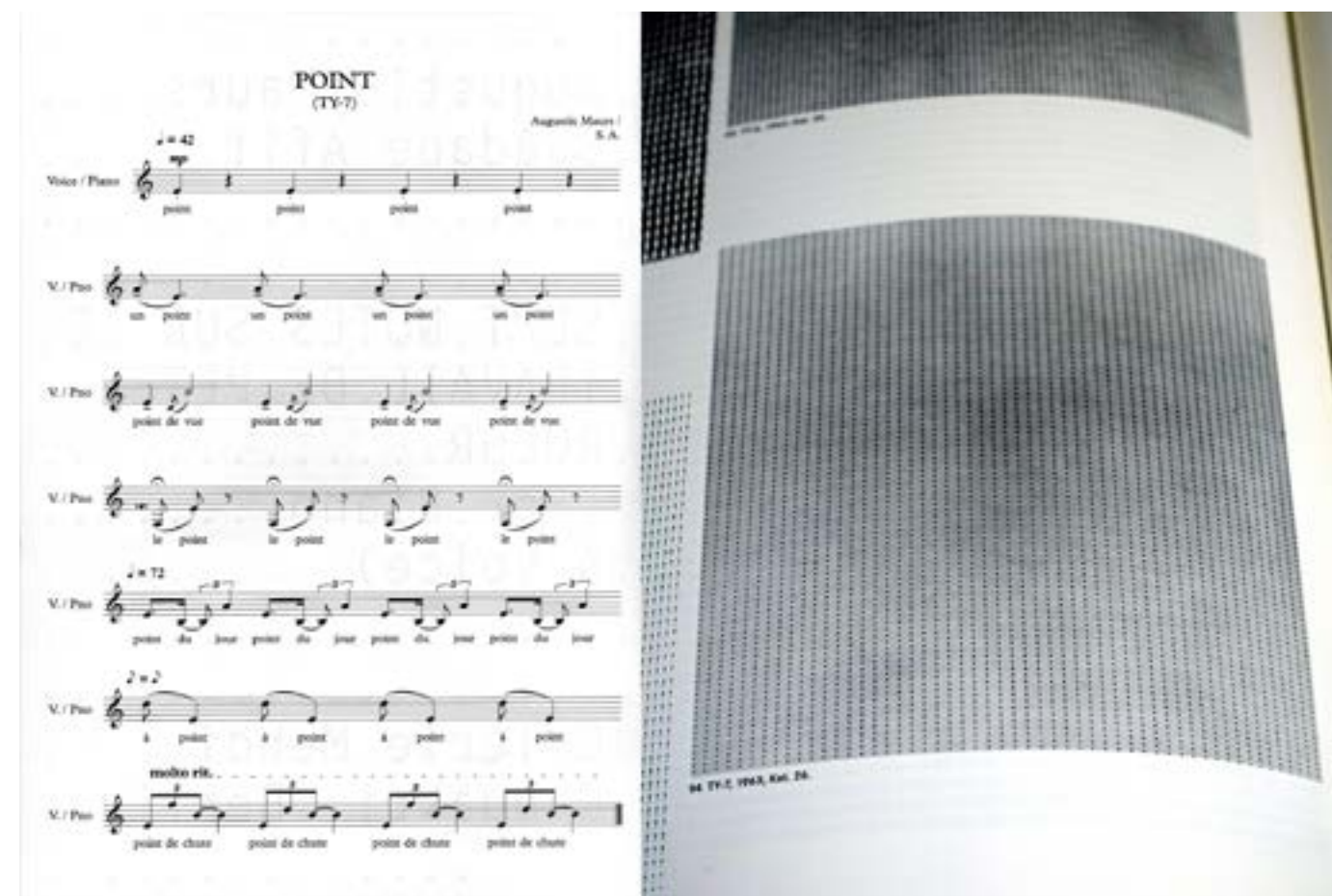
<https://youtu.be/qjUgfON8aDY?feature=shared&t=541>

Seven compositions for voice and Piano after Peter  
Roehr. Commissioned by Saâdane Afif.  
In the frame of 21 AGAIN Festival by Mouse on Mars

Also presented at Gallery Mehdi Choukri, Berlin,  
Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Teatro Goldoni, Venice

SEPT NOTES SUR PETER ROEHR

Hebbel am Ufer Theater, Berlin a.o. venues





## FOUND MELODIES AND STAINS

artgenève-Villa Sarasin, Geneva,  
29.01.2014 - 02.02.2014

AUGUSTIN MAURS

## Concert-Installation

with

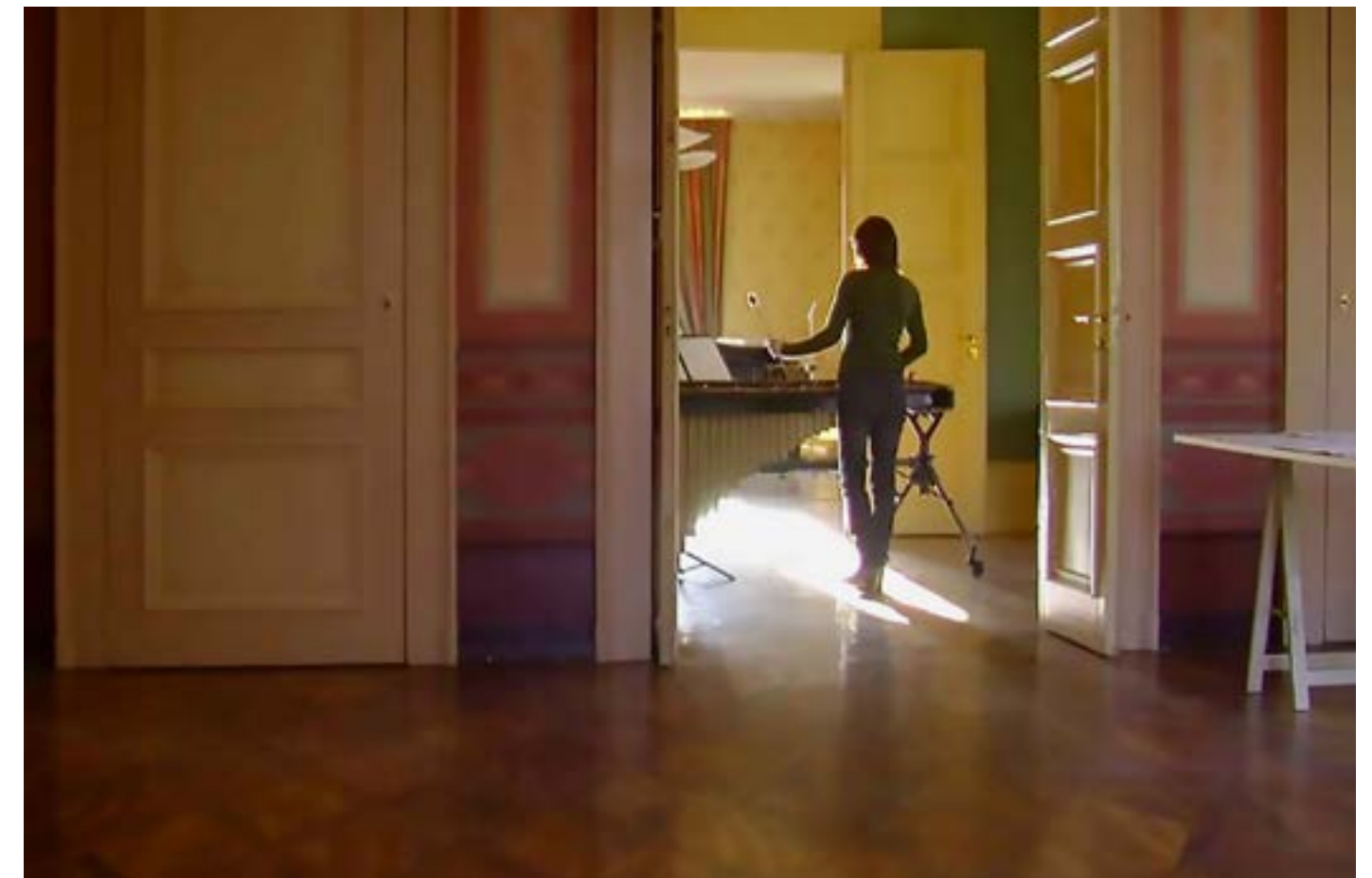
THE ENSEMBLE MATKA

The stain usually stands for the undesirable. It is the stigmata, it reveals a mistake. Beyond its unfounded existence, it can easily be confused with the sign, as is the case in musical notation where a note is represented by a single dot.

Found melodies and Stains looks into the stain as a musical vehicle for uncertain traces and tactile memories. Departing from a collection of smudged scores and documents, the musicians of the Matka Ensemble generate narratives with "stained, splashed and liquid scales" played in different rooms of the house – and at time converging to an unfinished polyphony.

## FOUND MELODIES AND STAINS

artgenève-Villa Sarasin, Geneva



Ensemble Matka performing *Found Melodies and Stains*

''

> Espace / mélodie

> Continuités / Pulsation radicante:

Tempo lent  
(Musicalité = instaurer des relations extérieures entre les sons)  
garder la tension entre deux impulsions sans que celle-ci soit dictée par un métronome. >  
**Pulsation radicante:**  
(rythmer l'espace)  
Son = tache = événement court.

> pulsation radicante sur une note

("positive" as a beginning, or "negative" as an end)  
transitions  
"valeur ajoutées"  
ornaments

''''''  
> Lecture des gammes tachées(2:)

Distinguer les signes déterminés (note sur portée) des signes non déterminés (note déformée, sans portée etc) et interpréter intuitivement les signes indéterminés en fonction de la notation habituelle.  
La densité de l'encre ou d'un trait peut être interprétée sur le plan de la dynamique / articulation etc.

> Gammes tactiles

> Collisions

> collisions alternées

1: si deux notes entrent en collision on les laisse (pour le reste de la durée)  
2: si deux notes entrent en collision: les allonger / jouer plus fort

> autres collisions possibles

'' '' **Differential**

shadow collisions (neutral collisions)  
implosive collisions  
explosive collisions  
selective collisions  
exchange collisions  
sequential collisions  
articulations  
syncopes

**2. MULTIREFERENTIALS**

**Multireferential fields**

**1. STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

**Additive**

voices (as any form of continuities)  
pulse  
impulse

> lieux et situations

flûte /guitare dos à dos  
percussion / basse côte à côte

> collisions combinées:

Arrêter tout bonnement la pièce  
jouer une mélodie  
narration (comment l'ensemble s'est formé mais raconté différemment)

> collisions de temporalités

Accélération  
ralentis

3 '' '' ''

> mélodies

Prendre la **mélodie 1** ou **10** comme exemple et investir le lieu.  
jouer dans des continuités individuelles

combiner taches et melodies

*POUR CORS DES ALPES*

Pièces d'été Malbuisson  
08.06.2013 -15.09.2013

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Outdoor Installation

Poem scores placed out in the mountains for alp horn players.

*POUR CORS DES ALPES*

Pièces d'été Malbuisson





*DIVERTIMENTO*

Adelaide Festival of Arts, Australia  
02.03.2012 - 18.03.2012

AUGUSTIN MAURS and ANNIKA LARSSON

Concert-performance

With  
STUDENTS OF THE ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY

Music is commonly defined as “organization of sounds”, by opposition to noise – etymologically from nausea, referring to nuisance, disorder or idleness. In the context of this opposition, where noise and idleness are considered negative, the musical genre of the Divertimento appears to be somehow ambiguous. Traditionally a light and entertaining composition, generally for a small ensemble, also described as *Nachtmusik*, a light, “after-dinner” and often outdoor music, the Divertimento used to accompany banquets and other social events.

The Divertimento in 4 movements for voices, objects, whistles and strings, is an attempt to draw on this ambiguity and invites performers and audience to a moment of distraction, amusement, entertainment and delight, but also to possibilities of rerouting, redirecting, and “changing the course of”. The piece combines a composed and staged rendition of idle talk and noise, offering a reflection on the reversibility of their connotations.

*DIVERTIMENTO*

Adelaide Festival of Arts, Australia

btw...the latest rumor is:

The barrel is contaminated...



*MADRIGAL*

UM-Festival für Zeitgenössische Kunst Literatur  
und Musik  
31.08.2012 - 02.09.2012

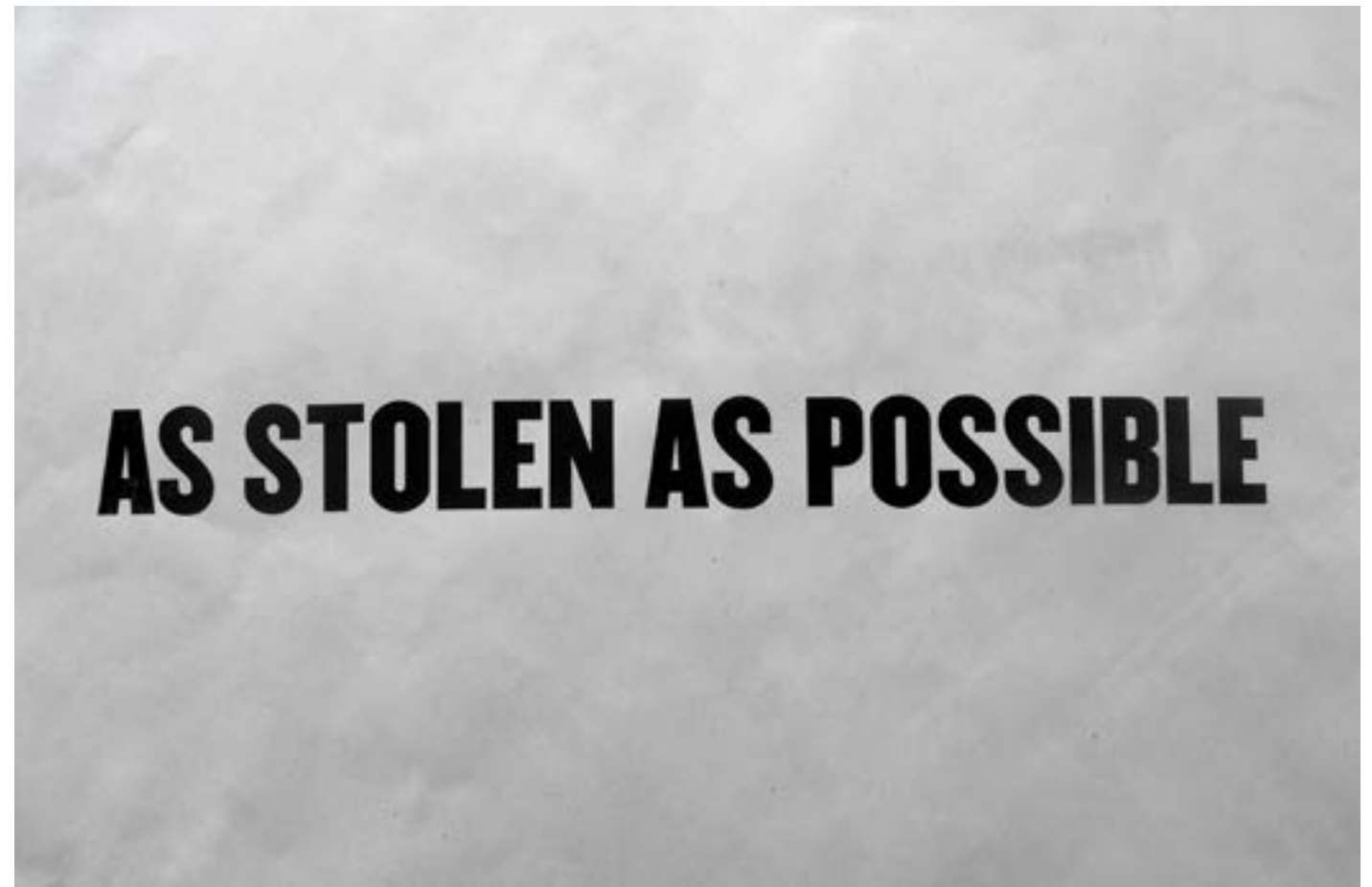
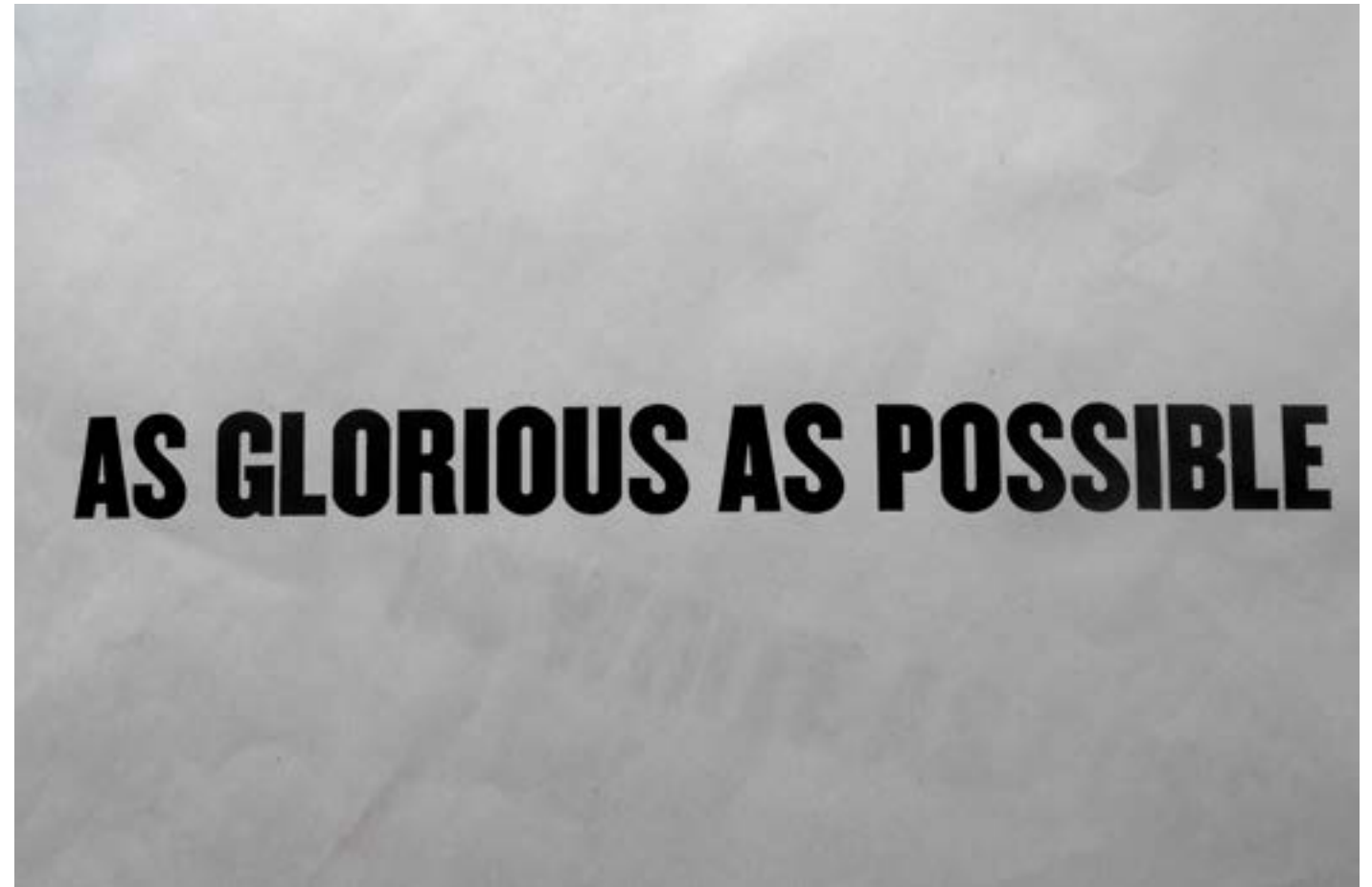
AUGUSTIN MAURS

Music Performance

Musicians follow a set of instructions until the  
guests of a dinner invade the space and take over the  
performance.

*MADRIGAL*

UM-Festival für Zeitgenössische Kunst





MUSIC FOR AMBIDEXTROUS MUSICIANS

Soundfair Berlin  
13.10.2011

AUGUSTIN MAURS and ANNIKA LARSSON

Concert / Musical Score

With  
MICHAEL WILHELMI

<https://vimeo.com/63144249>

A sounding picture on dexterity, embarrassment and indifference. The two cellists alternately display musical skills and mortifying helplessness while the orchestra members are getting drunk.

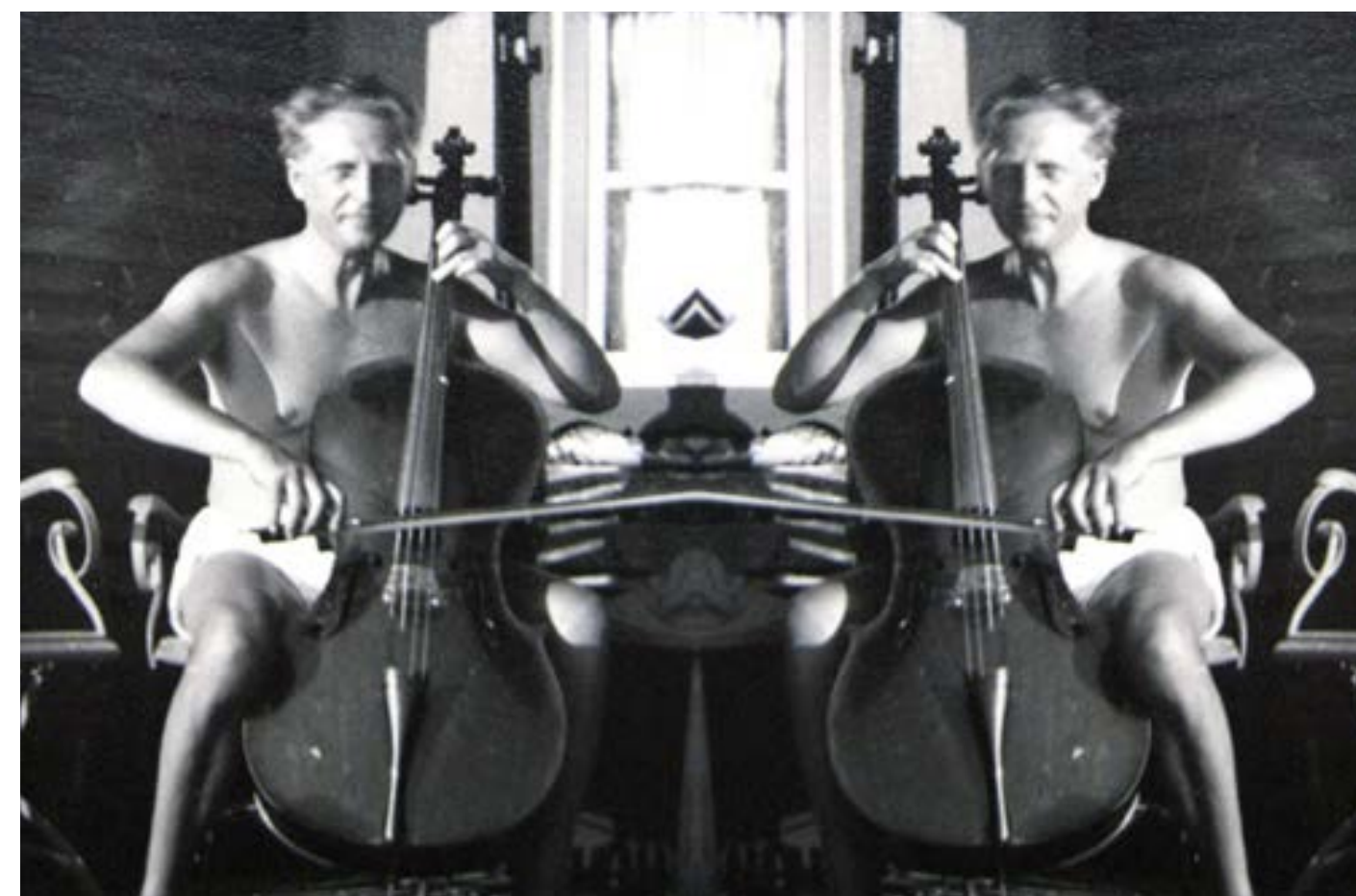
The Musical Score is part of the public collection of Frac Ile de France

MUSIC FOR AMBIDEXTROUS MUSICIANS

Soundfair Berlin



For Ambidextrous Musicians



Annika Larsson, 2 x Pringhorn

*ALLEMANDE – Reiterations on empty Stage*

Sophiensaele, Berlin  
2011

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Music Performance

<https://vimeo.com/63466689#t=1592s>

Reiteration of J.S. Bach's allemande from the 5th cello suite hidden from the stage.

*ALLEMANDE – Reiterations on empty Stage.*

Sophiensaele, Berlin





*MUSIC FOR DRUNK AUDIENCE*

Coma Gallery, Berlin  
2010

AUGUSTIN MAURS

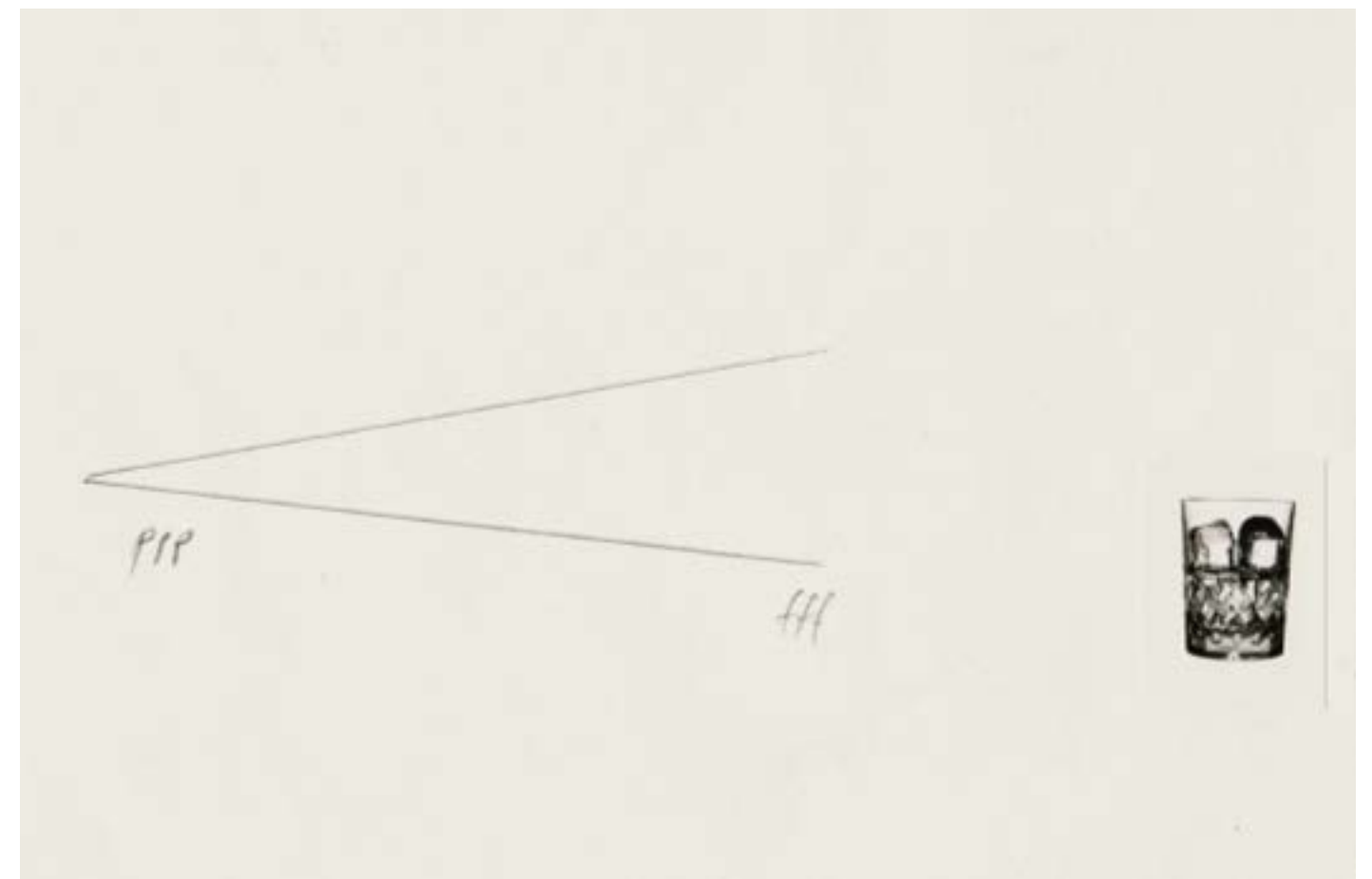
Performance

With  
MICHAEL WILHELMI (Piano)

Nearly audible melodic lines are played by the musicians while the audience is provided with strong liquor in a gallery space prepared with acoustical traps.

*MUSIC FOR DRUNK AUDIENCE*

Coma Gallery, Berlin



*KIEU*

Sophiensaele, Berlin  
2010

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Miniature opera

with  
YUKA YANAGIHARA, voice,  
MICHAEL WILHELMI, piano  
ALEX BABEL, percussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psdP72jJBMI>

Miniature opera based on the epic verse novel “The Tale of Kieu” by Nguyen Du (1765–1820). Departing from the character of “Kieu” – a young artist who is forced to sell herself to survive, the piece deals with the entanglements between dispossession and fiction. It travels through different composed and improvised musical archetypes staged and performed in almost complete darkness.

KIEU was awarded with the 100 Grad Festival Jury Prize

*KIEU*

Sophiensaele, Berlin



Yuka Yanagihara as Kieu



Michael Wilhelmi



AUGUSTIN MAURS  
in collaboration with GABI BARTELS, THOMAS F.  
EDER, ANNE-MARTHE KÜHN

Composition for Alternate Reality Opera

With  
the ensemble Zaafran Berlin

The Alternate Reality Opera stages five protagonists, not only with the help of creative use of media, but also on various media channels - both online and offline. In their online identities, these protagonists appear real, they inspire and befriend the audience. They could be experienced live in their everyday lives and at four performances that took place as a series over the course of a month. They attract people and encourage them to get actively involved in the action and become players in a theatrical scavenger hunt on the border between fiction and reality in search of the miracle.



Views of performance at Industrie Salon Schöneweide

## WINTERREISEN

HBC, Hebbel am Ufer, Coma Gallery, Schloss  
Bröllin and other venues  
2007-2011

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Music performance series

With  
BJÖRN LEHMANN (Klavier)  
ANDRE BARTEZKI (Elektronik)  
VERENA HARZER (Dramaturgie)  
and many more

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=a7ydiEiCQMs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7ydiEiCQMs)

*“Der Schubertschen “Winterreise” wächst aus der Gegenwart ein neuer, geradezu sozialpolitischer Sinn zu. Die Menschen dagegen geraten in den Sog eines Kunstwerkes, das sie auch nach langer Zeit noch immer ansieht und versteht.”*  
Peter Uehling, Berliner Zeitung

In 1827, the Austrian composer Franz Schubert sent an unnamed protagonist on his first wanderings with a “gruesome cycle”. For 24 songs, he staggers restlessly through a lonely winter landscape, driven by romantic longings and social abysses. He loses himself in the literary metaphors of Wilhelm Müller before finally arriving on the CD shelves of the educated middle classes as an icon of the expression of inner turmoil in the world-famous classical format.

Lack of place and orientation, fear of the future and social insecurity: Der Spiegel headlines with “Wir Kris- enkinder” (“We crisis children”), Die Zeit with “Generation Disappointment” - even in the 21st century, Schubert’s lonely wanderer is still on the move. The themes of Winterreise have never lost their validity, even beyond the famous song cycle, and touch people more often than they are discussed in public and in the media.

With the kind support of:  
Hauptstadtkulturfonds, INM (Initiative Neue Musik Berlin), Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk, Schloss Bröllin e.V. - international art research location, Outreach - Mobile Jugendarbeit Berlin, Elisabeth Kirche, Berlin Collectif Fusion, Villiers le bel, Stiftung Genshagen (Berlin Brandenburgisches Institut für Deutsch-Französische Zusammenarbeit in Europa).  
In Zusammenarbeit mit: Hebbel Theater (Hau 2), HBC, Berlin, Galerie COMA, Berlin, Elisabeth Kirche, Berlin, Maison de l’Europe, Paris

## WINTERREISEN

HBC, Hebbel am Ufer, Coma Gallery



Björn Lehmann



Jeuneviève Orjollet





Raswan Mohamed



Dagobert



Berliner Zeitung



Süddeutsche Zeitung

## BACH IN THE DARK

Goethe Institute, New York  
Werdenberg Festival  
Davos Annual Meeting 2012  
COMA Gallery Berlin a.o. venues  
20210- 2012

AUGUSTIN MAURS

Concert - Exhibition

*Augustin Maurs hat sich ins Niemandsland des Undefinierbaren begeben, ganz nah an die Schnittstelle von Kunst und Existenz. Seine Performance ist ein verstörendes Statement zur Frage von Identität und Inszenierung.*

*In the Dark* is a concert exhibition that offers a unique approach to Johann Sebastian Bach's Suites for Unaccompanied Cello. After years of examination, Augustin Maurs removed the suites from the concert hall and placed them in an unilluminated space, in which he repeatedly plays them over a period of ten days. Through the extended timeframe and the elimination of any visual input, the listener and the playing musician are unified within the same visual and musical space.

Originally conceived as studies, Bach's Cello Suites are dances written around 1720. Although unaccompanied, they are expansive polyphonic musical masterpieces, considered both the beginning and culmination of the cello repertoire. Uncertainty about the original creative intentions of the Suites invites perpetual debate and allows imaginative free reign for redefining the environment in which they are played. *Bach Suites in the Dark* removes the Suites from the concert hall and explores the malleability of the pieces and the notion of practice in which they are rooted.

The recording of the project was launched in the framework of the Goethe Institute New York performance in 2012.

## BACH IN THE DARK

Goethe Institute, New York a.o.

Prelude Allemande Courante Sarabande  
Minuets Gigue **Bach Suites** Prelude  
Allemande Courante Sarabande Bourrées  
Gigue Prelude Allemande Courante  
Sarabande Minuets Gigue **in the dark**  
Prelude Allemande Courante Sarabande  
Bourrées Gigue Prelude Allemande  
Courante Sarabande Minuets Gigue  
**Augustin Maurs, cello** Prelude Allemande  
Courante Sarabande Bourrées Gigue  
Prelude Allemande Courante Sarabande  
Minuets Gigue Prelude Allemande  
Courante Sarabande Minuets Gigue **Bach**  
**Cello Suites [BWV 1007-1012]**

Goethe-Institut  
Wyoming Building

5 East 3rd Street  
New York  
NY 10003



October 17-27

Opening Reception:

October 17, 6-8pm

Closing Artist Talk:

October 27, 6pm

admission free

October 18, 5-8pm

October 19, 3-7pm

October 20, 3-7pm

October 23, 5-8pm

October 24, 5-8pm

October 25, 5-8pm

October 26, 3-7pm

October 27, 3-6pm

[www.written-not-written.com](http://www.written-not-written.com) [www.goethe.de/newyork/wyomingbuilding](http://www.goethe.de/newyork/wyomingbuilding)



BACH IN THE DARK

Various venues



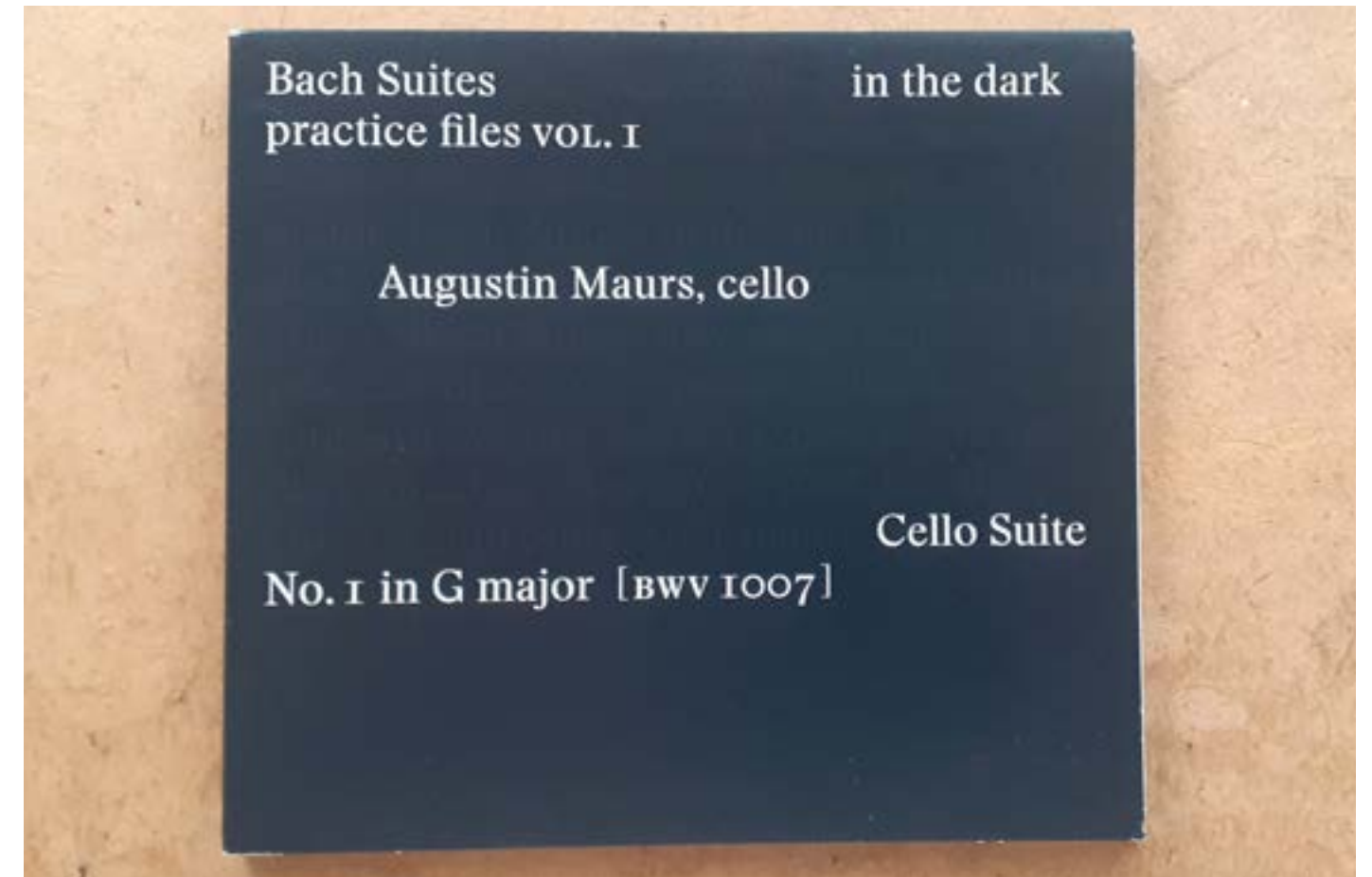
Black box view

BACH IN THE DARK

Various venues



Berliner Zeitung



CD Bach Suites

How could we move beyond the overuse of the word “performance”, its application for anything to do with artistic activity, or even any kind of social activity? How could we also move beyond the equally tiring rhetoric of transdisciplinary fluidity, and its evocation anytime a musician or visual artist or choreographer does something not strictly within the traditional bounds of their discipline? How could we not least move beyond the validation of all these activities as being “conceptual”, as if having a concept was something exclusive to those who expressly say so? Augustin Maurs’ answer to all three of these questions, I suspect, would be one word, and what it stands for: *musicality*.

Maurs may be described – in these aforementioned and slightly tired parameters of transdisciplinarity – as a composer and musician who has increasingly become active in the realm of contemporary visual art, not least with a series of projects commissioned by and realized for artgenève over the last few years. The focus of this essay is that very series, and Maurs’ notion of musicality is key to understanding it. But before I try to convey and expand on how he himself defines the term by taking his artgenève projects as a cue, let me briefly digress by bringing up two associations I had when he first brought up that notion of musicality in conversation.

First, I had to think of a phone app my eleven year old daughter keeps using. I first noticed it when she was moving in abbreviated R&B-HipHop moves for the camera of her phone, with head wiggles and hand gestures and silently moving mouth. The app is called musical.ly and is a sort of Instagram-cum-silent karaoke. In short, 15 second selfie clips, kids and teenagers sing or lip-sync, and move or dance, to well known bubblegum pop or R&B. Some of them become stars in the very medium, musical.ly heroes and heroines that in turn have millions of followers and mainstream sponsors, just like the pop stars they initially imitated. The Shanghai-based start-up behind musical.ly already has attracted more than 130 million users (the majority of which are tween and teen girls), and venture capital also in the hundreds of millions has been unleashed, while big companies invest in musical.ly-based “influencer” product placement. But what I find striking about the app is not so much its quantitative reach as a social media tool, but how it literally affects how my daughter carries herself, how she talks and sings and moves also outside of the direct interaction with her phone, as she peppers her conversation with movements and tonal evocations that are essentially elements of US African-American Hip-Hop culture filtered through Asian K-pop culture, distilled into micro-choreographies of an eleven-year-old Berlin girl’s everyday. One way to look at it is to describe my daughter’s gesturing and intonation as being transformed and infiltrated by corporatized (and ultimately monetized) stereotypes; another – which I maybe naively tend to prefer – is to read it as her way to accommodate and make livable these technological environments, adopting but also parodying their logic.

The second association I had upon hearing that deceptively simple term “musicality” was another deceptively opaque-sounding term, that of *prosody*. Part of the terminology of linguistics, it designates the phonological aspects of speech such as rhythm, stress and intonation.<sup>1</sup> These sound patterns are partly responsible for the formation of meaning (sincerity, irony, parody, etc.) and emotional subtext (indignation, enthusiasm, confusion, fear, etc.). But they are also subject to certain conventionalized patterns that serve proper understanding (for example if the stress in “he gave her cat *food*” versus “he gave her *cat* food” substantially changes the meaning<sup>2</sup>). Hence prosody is a technical term, defining how we convey meaning to one another, willingly or unwillingly, and how understanding would in fact be nearly impossible without it. But if we take it as an allegory also beyond the realm of speech, it becomes a way to describe how every event – “event” as a catch-all term for sounds emitted, or objects presented, or gestures done – has different levels of rhythm, stress and intonation that are not only tangential, but actually essential to the effect the event may have on its “witnesses”, and how the latter may interpret it. This makes it sound more complicated than it actually is, since every time we laugh at a piece of slapstick we probably laugh not least because we are presented with an “unfitting” prosody attached to some event: say, the chair that crashes under someone during the pianissimo part of an elegiac chamber concert. Or, to give another example: Spike Jones, the famous composer of comical, zany

music soundtracks, recalled how he first came up with the idea of “planned mistakes” in his compositions after witnessing Stravinsky conducting a performance of his own composition *The Firebird*: “Stravinsky was wearing new patent leather shoes and I was sitting close enough to notice [that] every time he went up on his toes in preparation for a downbeat, his shoes would squeak. So here go the violins, and here goes his shoes – perfect harmony!”<sup>3</sup> Cheekily, Jones describes how an unintended prosodic shift in rhythm, stress and intonation by way of the squeaking soles inspired him to do the same thing intentionally.

But to come back to Maurs’ musicality, he has stated that it “is about inserting non-musical things into music.” In other words, for him the term designates a particular quality of other factors – machines, bodies, spaces, semiotic (dis-)agreements, other art forms and their respective conceptualizations – entering the transitory cloud of music, and how, paradoxically, these factors that seem, strictly speaking, *alien* to that cloud actually define it, even call it into being. The interaction between these musical and non-musical factors *is* musicality. The projects in the series realized with artgenève are cases in point.

Even before that series actually set in, however, a project that Maurs realized in collaboration with Thomas Hug in 2010 can be seen as a perfect exemplification of the described concept of musicality. Even though one could at first think it was rather about virtuosity, for the musical element of *Bach Suites in the Dark* is an enshrined classic for cello players, Johann Sebastian Bach’s six cello solo suites of 1717–23. The concept of the project entails Maurs playing the suites, which are also increasingly challenging technically, in absolute darkness, while the audience is left to trust solely its sense of hearing, with the traditional framing of the concert radically removed. In a lucid text written in response to the project, Christian Baier describes how famous cellists perform the Bach suites and how, in the case of Yo-Yo Ma for example, “His face contracts in concentration before, just as the bow approaches the strings, it opens up like a fist unclenching.” We all know these expressive routines, and we can imagine how they may at least have a lateral influence on the way we hear the music, whether we are aware of that or not. With no performer personality or concert hall ritual to influence, or distract from, our listening experience, however, we’re just sitting there in the dark, left with little but the feeling of the presence of our own body, and the presence of Bach’s music in the moment it is performed. The crystalline structures contoured by the solo instrument, implying contrapuntal voicing in a single musical line amount to a psychedelic experience, as they seem to cascade, circle and dance around you in the dark. In other words, what would first seem to be about virtuosity – the capability, sophistication and grace of playing – shifts towards musicality, away from the musician towards the listener, or rather, into the space they share.

That very shift was what largely motivated Minimal Art from the 1960s on. Visual artists such as Tony Smith or Robert Morris posited that what they presented were neither monuments nor objects, but something in-between, stripped down to a singular and/or serial shape placed in such a way that the viewer’s own navigation amongst the work(s) within the space in which they were placed became the most important part of the experience.<sup>4</sup> Within the orthodoxy of (Post-)Minimal Art, that ultimately meant to emphasize the autonomy of the artwork as it is placed within a white cube scenario, because it is truly the artwork and its placement that triggers that effect rather than some aura provided by the artistic “style” as manifested in figurative motif, compositional detail, virtuosity of gesture etc. The same holds true for Conceptual Art of the 60s: with the demotion of “style” came the enhancement of the relation between viewer, work, space, and placement.

But the shift from being “absorbed” by the artwork and its style towards a heightened feeling of oneself as a viewer in relation to the work and its surroundings also opened up the possibility that this very act of placement – where, when, and how does the artwork appear, to whom? – would venture outside of the conventional exhibition framework. And so it did: contemporary artworks and performances popped up in all sorts of fringes of the art context, and well beyond. There is no space here to recount all the steps in that development, but it has almost become common knowledge that a contemporary artwork can today be a meal, a cinema movie, a novel, a protest march, a song – something that appears

in another context but holds significance precisely because it does so, as a kind of camouflage or simulacrum or uncanny sibling of ordinary, real life, including its cultural conventions.

In music, we have singular examples of such developments, namely in the work of composers such as John Cage or Alvin Lucier, or artists such as Laurie Anderson who have worked in-between contemporary art and music right from the beginning. However, talking about contemporary music as a field in general – similarly to auteur film and to a lesser extent contemporary theater – it has been surprisingly stubborn in adhering to its mid-19th to mid-20th century paradigm of the concert hall performance, the record release, the formats and units of the classic orchestra or chamber ensemble etc. The concert hall performance, just like your regular theater or cinema visit, also comes with the usual conventions of ticket pricing, seating, stage, starting time and duration of performance including pauses, and even the typical coughing cascading through the audience during a concert etc. In other words, we are couched in a whole set of traditions, rituals and conscious or unconscious habits, as if to ease the shock, surprise and frustration of the as yet unknown, muffle it amongst reassuring conditions.

It could be argued that these conventions are necessary to assure the best possible hearing experience – concentration, space acoustics etc. In music, it could also be said that the mobility of the recording – often, not always, the document of a performance – allows for unexpected uses and conditions, depending on when and where and how we listen. It could also be argued that there are works that nevertheless shoot through the muffling effect of convention; or even that some works are so innovative precisely because they occur within a deceptively conventional setting. What’s more, in contemporary art, these kinds of conceptual, performative approaches have become pervasive to the extent that they are now a convention in themselves; there is no shock or even just confusion anymore in many of the tried and tested ways of letting performance happen.

Nevertheless, and at the risk of generalizing, it seems that musicians and composers today could play much more with social situation and placement beyond the conventions of staging. In order to do so, it would become necessary that they embrace a *conceptual* attitude towards placement and situation that first came about in the 1960s at the interstices of disciplines: say, the transdisciplinary Black Mountain College activities of John Cage, or the background serving as a poet of first generation conceptualist Lawrence Weiner, or the political activism of Argentinian art group Tucuman Ardé, all of which dealt in one way or other with an unraveling of the very framework of what an art experience could actually be. And in fact musicians and composers increasingly follow in these footsteps, while contemporary artists, vice versa, seek to collaborate with the experimentally inclined protagonists of the music world. In the process – again at the risk of generalizing – contemporary artists tend to feel confident about their conceptuality, while sometimes underestimating the importance of musicality; musicians tend to be slightly insecure or untrained about conceptuality, while sometimes underestimating the conceptual significance of musicality itself. Augustin Maurs’ series of collaborations with artgenève over the years could be seen as a kind of continuing effort to break down these subtle but significant barriers.

The evening titled *Virtuosity* that took place at the Chamber Music Hall of Berlin’s Philharmonie in April 2013 is a case in point. Amongst the numerous contributions,<sup>5</sup> let me just give two examples: Olaf Nicolai and Tino Sehgal. For his project *Escalier Du Chant*, first realized at Munich’s Pinakothek der Moderne, Nicolai had approached Elliott Sharp, along with a number of other musicians and composers, to make a new vocal piece in response to current political events, to be performed by an cappella ensemble or solo singers in a situation that was transitory (in this instance, on a staircase) and unannounced (in the sense that the exact timing was kept as a surprise). At the Philharmonie, mezzo soprano vocalist Truike van der Poel performed Sharp’s *The Ballad of Bradley Manning* in a regular stage situation; it’s a song written from the perspective of the infamous US soldier who leaked US army data from Iraq and Syria, including documentation of war crimes, to Wikileaks (and who, by now as Chelsea Manning, has been pardoned by Barack Obama shortly before the end of his term as president). Held on the cusp between searing, traumatic emotionality and an almost coldly conceptual, almost Dadaist

unraveling of language into its basic components, with stuttered consonants and prolonged vocals, further shaped by basic musical devices such as pitch, loudness, emphasis, vibrato etc., the performance of the song is precisely based on the score, with passages such as: “ttt t t t t t t t th thththth ththththethewuwuwrrwrword... word... is it free or is there price to pay?” What emerges is an imaginative, post-traumatic monologue of a person who became a whistleblower, and whose personal traumas became amplified and transmogrified in mass and social media, while draconic state persecution was put in place.

Another piece that entails a score written by Nicolai himself brought Truike van der Poel to the ticket office area, outside the concert hall itself. Here, she sang solo, as people stood in line, based on a score that looks like a set of four star constellation maps, in which dots of yellow, red, green, and blue work like indications of duration and intensity (*Diaphanic Backpackers*, 2013). This notation is visually alluring, but also aleatoric, leaving a lot to the performer. Standing near the line in front of the ticket office, van der Poel’s voice enters the sphere outside the actual concert hall, and as soon as the singing ventures offstage so to speak, the tension between emotionality and conceptuality becomes all the more poignant. Just as the singer’s trained voice unexpectedly cuts through the hustle and bustle like a knife through butter.

In his work, Tino Sehgal has given the creation of social situations and their placement the central role, with no objects or even written statements to accompany. At Philharmonie he realized the first instantiation of what would become his contribution to the Venice Biennale 2013. Again, in the lobby or staircase area of the Philharmonie, a number of his protagonists were engaged in what seemed at first a slightly mysterious choreography of movements, often done while slouching on the floor, solo or in unison. There is no discerning beginning, middle, or end to the piece, it just seems to unfold like a living being, yet following a certain plan or pattern, present but largely non-intrusive, continuing to draw you in but without using any tactics of shock and awe. What keeps the whole thing going is, unmistakably, music: the people make rhythms and tones with nothing but their voices, sometimes sounding like a human beatbox, at others like cranes or peacocks calling in unison. Either way, everything is very rhythmical and often in synchronicity with the others. Beholding this work unfold is like watching a flock of starlings move in close coordination, emitting a strange kind of magic in which individuals seem to become part of a bigger organism that moves gracefully. In other words, it’s anything *but* a regular musical performance, even though music is clearly at its center. It not only doesn’t need a regular stage, and a start (when everyone falls silent to listen) and an end (where everyone applauds and the performers bow), but it actually wouldn’t even remotely be what it is and do what it does as an artwork with these things.

So to come back to Maurs’ notion of musicality, what Sehgal’s piece exemplifies is that musicality here resides in a pitch-perfect instruction and coaching, leaving a lot to the individual protagonists of the piece but still making sure what they do, and how precisely they do it, adds up. In others words, the first non-musical element that awards these “interpreters”<sup>6</sup> and their renderings grace and elegance ultimately results from the eloquence and subtlety of the instructions they were given – in the conceptual yet embodied framework. The second non-musical factor is, equally conceptually driven, their placement in the transitory area and the open-endedness yet clearly planned aspect of what they do.

Of course, the history of modern and contemporary music has seen many examples of composers stretching and at times breaking the logic of the classical notational system in their scores; not least, they have often played with aleatoric, at times radically contingent elements, leaving a lot, if not sometimes almost everything, to the musical performers. In that sense, what Maurs did for his 2014 project for Villa Sarasin, a 19th century residential building near artgenève, was nothing new, per se. *Found Melodies and Stains* does what the title says: musicians are confronted with sheet music bearing stains and spots. But instead of having to ignore them like fly droppings or spilled ink, these stains become their actual focus, the task being that they translate them into sound and music. Importantly, they don’t do so amidst the heightened attention awarded by the classical stage performance, but in a more casual walk-in scenario, scattered across rooms like guests waiting, as if playing to kill time. This purposeful intensification of the inadvertent and random, paired with the equally



purposeful de-intensification of the act of performance, produces something that actually feels more like a “regular” installation of art than a concert, only that instead of sculpture, real musicians perform, and instead of paintings, the scores become visual elements.

One year later, in 2015, at the same spot, Anri Sala created a sort of sonic hall of mirrors. The starting point was a previous work by Sala, the video *Long Sorrow* of 2005. The camera very slowly, over minutes, zooms from a room with nothing in it but a radiator onto a half open window; there we see the back of someone’s dreadlocked head – we know it must be the saxophone player we have listened to during that zoom. It’s the eminent free jazz alto saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc. Eventually the camera shows us there is no balcony at the spot where he plays at the top of a high rise residential building (the scene was shot in a council estate in northern Berlin), and even though we never get to see his feet, it’s as if the player were levitating, just like his music. And that music is an eloquent monologue, with an elegiac melodic tone as the underlying continuum from which occasional voiced or sung squeaks and words (“end!”, “see!”) emanate like puffs from a steam locomotive. It’s like prosody without all the rest – intense emanations of rhythm, stress, and intonation. In 2011, Sala asked another improvisational saxophonist, André Vida, to marathon-perform live on film over the course of 51 days during his exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in London. In Geneva, Sala used the recordings from these Serpentine sessions called *3-2-1* alongside *Long Sorrow*, and Vida this time faced not only the task to improvise to Moondoc, but to his own playing as well. What’s more, Sala also asked him to slip in yet another work that he had previously worked on with Vida, together with the trombone player Hilary Jeffrey: the score of *Where the Moon Notes Equal the Beach Bridges* (2012) is a compilation of more than a hundred pop song bridges – those parts of the song, usually placed after the second chorus, that digress from the verse-chorus pattern in order to keep the listener’s attention and create a moment of redemption before the song returns to its previous formula. In this roundelay of playing along, with and against, musicality is pitted against musicality, as recording and live, pop song quote and free jazz freakout, artistic conceptualization and musical improvisation interlock, cacophonically and majestically.

In 2016, the project *Seven Ideas of Stolen Time* took as its starting point a 19th century device of musical notation and way of playing, often associated with the work of Frédéric Chopin: *tempo rubato*, Italian for “stolen time”. In sheet music, that instruction means that at the given point in the piece, the player can speed up and/or slow down the tempo at their own discretion. Thus, expressive freedom lends the interpretation a sense of expressive, intuitive naturalness – musicality of the here-and-now. From the seven contributions,<sup>7</sup> let me just give two examples. Jonathan Monk’s *A Piece For Piano (My Mother Cleaning My Father’s Piano 2001)* (2015) is accompanied by the instruction that the action – deriving from the title – is to be performed in-between other pieces. Obviously, Monk here builds on the kind of deadpan humor mixed with Zen stoicism that arguably originates with David Tudor’s 1952 interpretation of John Cage’s *4’33”* – which instructs the player(s) to stay silent for the duration of the composition – by alternately opening and closing the piano lid for the piece’s three movements. But Monk also takes that attitude two decisive steps further by bringing not only his own parents and class-specific gender roles into play, but also by defining the work as an intermission or interlude between other pieces, further stripping it down to its slapstick core, which is to say to the physical comedy of the in-between slippage, in the spirit of Spike Jones’s musings about Stravinsky’s squeaking shoes.

From one giant of modernity (Cage) to another (Marcel Proust), and from stolen to lost time, Louis Scoufaras’s *Temps Perdu* (2013) builds on a simple application of an important rule of classic minimalism: take things literal, but wittily so. In this case, the artist read out Proust’s novel encompassing four volumes in its French Pleiades edition in its entirety, resulting in 128 recorded hours; these were then, with the help of sound software, compressed (i.e. sped up but with the original pitch preserved) to 16 minutes for each volume with 16 minutes of silence in-between respectively. The epic timespan of the famously lengthy novel is literally lost. The resulting sound piece has the unsettling, brooding quality of a swarming bee colony, or rather robot bee colony – hissing, scrambled, captivating yet menacing, like a long horror film curse. That effect was

heightened as Scoufaras installed speakers around the outer walls of Villa Sarasin, as if the house were haunted by the spirit of Proust.

It would go well beyond the scope of this little essay to discuss all of the works that have been part of these years of collaboration between artgenève and Maurs, notwithstanding all relevant aspects of each of these many projects. But what can be said is that they all are chosen, commissioned or conceived in the spirit of a search for musicality. Often, the “non-musical” aspect that Maurs describes as the one that actually brings musicality into being, like the grain of sand that makes the pearl, is conceptuality coming from a contemporary art trajectory. However, one shouldn’t assume that this relationship is a one-way street, in the sense of a kind of injection of some supposedly superior knowledge or technique nurtured in the art realm; in turn, it cannot be assumed that there is any reason for an aloofness of musical virtuosity and knowledge vis-à-vis the supposed dilettantism of visual artists dabbling in music. What needs to be understood, rather, is that both realms can only profit if they seek to consult the other as a kind of remedy for their inevitable blind spots and inhibitions so to speak, caused by the inevitable *deformations professionnelles* produced by the respective institutional and infrastructural frameworks. In other words, to hypostasize – turn into a fetish – the quality of musicality is precisely to enfeeble it; equally, contemporary artists shouldn’t feel too sure about conceptuality per se giving them license, as if somehow having authored a clever-sounding plan would exonerate them from responsibility if the result somehow lacks, well, musicality. One could also put it this way: both musicians/composers and visual artists are in charge of letting their work literally come to life, and not allowing it to be suffocated by the faux authority awarded by convention.

1 Cf. Marina Nespov, “Prosody: an interview with Marina Nespov”, *ReVEL*, vol. 8, no. 15, 2010, p. 381.

2 Nespov, *ibid.*, p. 382.

3 quoted from Scott Stanton, *The Tombstone Tourist: Musicians*, New York: Gallery Books, 2003, p. 136

4 Cf. Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture”, *Artforum* February 1966 (part 1) and *Artforum* October 1966 (part 11), reprinted in Gregory Battcock (ed.), *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 1995 (1968), p. 222-235.

5 by Saādane Afif, Bethan Huws, Christoph Keller, Annika Larsson, Klara Lidén, Olaf Nicolai (feat. Eliott Sharp), Tracey Rose, Tino Sehgal, and with performers including the Kammerensemble für Neue Musik Berlin, Truike van der Poel, and Chor der Kulturen der Welt.

6 Sehgal prefers to call the people in his works “interpreters” to avoid the term “performers”; thus he wants to mark the difference of his almost living-sculpture-like pieces to stage- and time-defined performances.

7 by Saādane Afif, John Armleder & Christian Marclay, Jean-Pascal Flavien, Karl Holmqvist, Jonathan Monk, Tisha Mukarji, and Louis-Philippe Scoufaras.